

# **The Education and Employment Experiences of First Nations People Living Off Reserve, Inuit, and Métis: Selected Findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey**

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|----------------|--|
| .              | not available for any reference period   |
| ...            | not available for a specific reference period  |
| ...            | not applicable   |
| 0              | true zero or a value rounded to zero   |
| 0 <sup>s</sup> | value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded |
| P              | preliminary  |
| r              | revised  |
| X              | suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the <i>Statistics Act</i>                                   |
| E              | use with caution   |
| F              | too unreliable to be published   |
| *              | significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )   |

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## Introduction

In its 1996 report, *Gathering Strength*, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples called education “the key that unlocks the door to the future” (RCAP, 1996). Education is a priority for First Nations people, Inuit and Métis. Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, stated that “Education offers the spark that can light the fire of potential in an individual” (Atleo, 2012). At the same time, Terry Audla, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, identified education as a priority for Inuit, stating that “Existing socio-economic conditions will worsen unless more Inuit children graduate from high school” (Audla, 2012). Clément Chartier, President of the Métis National Council, also noted that “Education must prepare Métis people to fully participate in the economy of our communities and Canadian society” (Chartier, 2013).

A growing number of First Nations people, Inuit and Métis have been completing high school and pursuing postsecondary studies (CESC, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2008). Data for 2011 from the National Household Survey (NHS) show that attainment rates for First Nations people, Inuit and Métis at the trades and college levels are comparable to those of the non-Aboriginal population. However, many First Nations people, Inuit and Métis do not finish high school, and their university completion rates lag behind those of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2013a).

Until recently, research that addressed factors related to school outcomes specifically for Aboriginal peoples in Canada was limited. In 2007, the Canadian Council on Learning, in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and organizations across Canada, undertook an initiative - “Redefining how Success is Measured in Aboriginal Learning.” Frameworks were developed that recognize that Aboriginal learning is holistic and lifelong, comes from many different sources, and is rooted in Aboriginal languages and cultures (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

Acknowledging these frameworks, the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) examined a diverse range of education experiences among First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit and Métis. Based on a thematic approach, data were collected that allow an in-depth exploration of factors associated with education outcomes. The present report focuses on the education and employment experiences of adults aged 18 to 44 - a cohort who had recently been enrolled in the school system or were pursuing postsecondary education.

Central to this report are two groups who form the basis for understanding the education and employment experiences of First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit and Métis aged 18 to 44: “completers” and “leavers.” “Completers” have fulfilled the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent. “Leavers” do not have high school credentials and were not attending elementary or high school at the time of the survey. Individuals who started school and stayed until they received a high school diploma (no breaks in attendance) are considered to have followed a “direct” path to completion. Those who completed high school with one or more breaks in attendance are considered to have followed an “indirect” path (Figure 1).

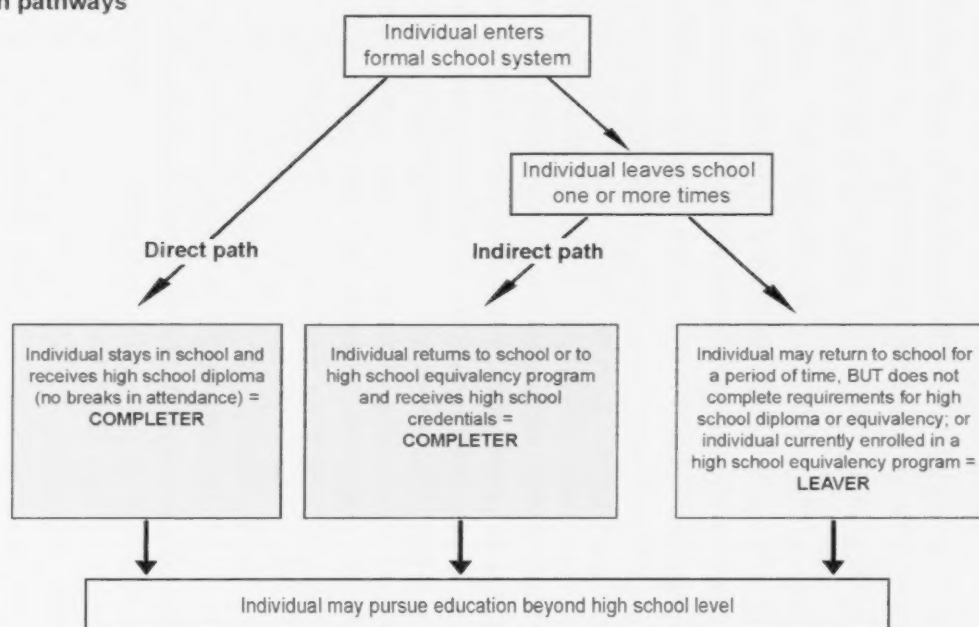
In recognition of the uniqueness of each of the three Aboriginal groups, separate analyses were conducted and reported for First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit, and Métis, with no systematic attempt to make comparisons between the groups. This report is, therefore, organized into three parts: Part A contains the findings for off-reserve First Nations people; Part B, for Inuit; and Part C, for Métis. Each set of findings is self-contained and was designed to be read independently.

The analysis for each group is presented in five sections. Sections 1 and 2 examine an array of education characteristics for First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit and Métis. These sections compare high school completers with leavers on variables such as education pathways and reasons for leaving or returning to school. As well, school attendance and achievement, participation in extracurricular activities, mobility, peer influence, parental support, and school environment during respondents' last year in school are explored.

Section 3 describes the postsecondary education experiences of First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit and Métis, based on indicators such as postsecondary credentials, moving for postsecondary studies, distance education, funding, and reasons for not finishing postsecondary schooling.



**Figure 1:  
Education pathways**



The 2012 APS also collected data on various aspects of the employment experiences of First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit and Métis. Key issues - employment and unemployment, challenges to finding work, employment income, and non-participation in the labour force - are examined in Section 4.

Finally, Section 5 examines barriers to further schooling, such as cost, family responsibilities, feelings of being unprepared, lack of availability of courses, and health. This section also explores plans for further education.

### **Difference between highest level of educational attainment and completer/leaver status**

This report explores the education and employment experiences of those who have a high school diploma or equivalent ("completers") and those who were not attending school at the time of the survey and had not completed high school ("leavers").

This differs from highest level of educational attainment. Some "completers" may have obtained further education at a trade school, college or university, and so may have a certificate, diploma or degree beyond the high school level. Equally, some "leavers" may have obtained postsecondary credentials despite not having completed the requirements for a high school diploma.

It is important to note that APS data were collected for off-reserve First Nations people, Inuit and Métis aged 6 or older. Thus, analysis of the education experiences of children and youth currently attending elementary and high school, as well as those of individuals aged 45 or older, is also possible leading to a fuller understanding of life-long learning.

Moreover, this report does not reflect the breadth of data collected in the 2012 APS. Information on topics such as physical and mental health, Aboriginal languages, housing, mobility, and residential school attendance is also available for further analysis.

## Highlights

### Section 1: Education pathways

- In 2012, 72% of First Nations people living off reserve, 42% of Inuit and 77% of Métis aged 18 to 44 had a high school diploma or equivalent ("completers"). The 2011 National Household Survey data showed that the figure for the non-Aboriginal population was 89%.
- Among completers, an estimated 14% of off-reserve First Nations people, 15% of Inuit and 9% of Métis had left school at least once before obtaining their high school diploma. The majority reported they returned to school because they "realized the value of an education/wanted a diploma."
- At the time of the survey, 28% of First Nations people living off reserve, 58% of Inuit and 23% of Métis aged 18 to 44 were not attending high school and had not met the requirements for a high school diploma ("leavers"). According to the 2011 National Household Survey, the figure for the non-Aboriginal population was 11%.
- While the majority of leavers dropped out once, 39% of off-reserve First Nations leavers, 34% of Inuit leavers and 32% of Métis leavers dropped out multiple times. Men commonly dropped out due to a desire to work, money problems, school problems, and lack of interest. "Pregnancy/childcare responsibilities" was reported by one-quarter of off-reserve First Nations and Métis women and 38% of Inuit women who did not complete high school.

### Section 2: Experiences during last year of school

- Off-reserve First Nations people, Inuit, and Métis completers and leavers had different personal, family, and school environment characteristics during their last year in high school. For example, higher percentages of completers reported having good grades, while leavers skipped classes or arrived late more often. Completers participated more often in extracurricular activities and also read books more frequently, than did leavers.
- Higher percentages of completers reported having many close friends with high education aspirations—friends who thought that completing high school was very important and who planned further education beyond high school.
- In terms of family characteristics, higher percentages of completers had a mother and/or father with at least a high school education, while leavers were more likely to have siblings who dropped out of school.
- More completers had parents who were involved during their last year in school—parents who spoke to or visited their teachers, attended a school event, or participated in school activities—although this was only true among off-reserve First Nations people and Métis.
- Higher percentages of completers felt safe and happy at their school. Completers were also more likely than leavers to report having received support from school staff during their last year in school.

### Section 3: Postsecondary education experiences

- In 2012, 43% of off-reserve First Nations people, 26% of Inuit, and 47% of Métis aged 18 to 44 had a postsecondary qualification; that is, a certificate, diploma or degree above the high school level. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, the figure for the non-Aboriginal population was 64%.

- The percentages with a postsecondary qualification were higher among high school completers. Nonetheless, 16% of off-reserve First Nations leavers, 12% of Inuit leavers, and 16% of Métis leavers had obtained a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree.
- An estimated 40% of off-reserve First Nations people, 50% of Inuit, and 42% of Métis with postsecondary credentials moved to pursue their education. Those with a university degree were the most likely to have done so.
- The most common reasons why First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit and Métis reported not finishing postsecondary education were: got a job or wanted to work; lost interest or lacked motivation; pregnancy, caring for their children or other family responsibilities; and courses were too hard.
- First Nations people living off reserve and Métis also cited financial reasons for not finishing their postsecondary education. Other reasons included "having moved" for First Nations people living off reserve; "too difficult to be away from home" for Inuit; and "own health" for Métis.

#### Section 4: Current employment experiences

- A higher share of completers than leavers were employed at the time of the 2012 APS: 72% versus 47% for off-reserve First Nations people; 71% versus 44% for Inuit; and 80% versus 61% for Métis.
- Among completers, the percentages of men and women who were employed did not differ. This was also true for Inuit leavers. However, off-reserve First Nations and Métis male leavers were more likely than female leavers to have a job.
- For First Nations people living off reserve and Métis, the median employment income range for completers was \$10,000 higher than that for leavers; for Inuit completers, the median income range was \$20,000 higher.
- A shortage of jobs, a lack of education or training, and work inexperience were commonly reported as reasons for not being able to find work by unemployed off-reserve First Nations people, Inuit, and Métis aged 18 to 44. Other reasons included "no transportation available" for First Nations people living off reserve; "not knowing where to look for work" for Inuit; and "not knowing what type of work they wanted" for Métis.

#### Section 5: Further education or training

- Off-reserve First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leavers were generally more likely than completers to report facing barriers to taking further schooling. Such barriers included being too busy; available courses not matching needs; lack of confidence; taking courses not being a personal priority; cost; personal and family responsibilities; and personal health.
- Men commonly cited cost as well as training not being a high personal priority as reasons for not undertaking further schooling. Among women, personal or family responsibilities were commonly reported, especially by leavers.
- Two-thirds (65%) of off-reserve First Nations people, 55% of Inuit and 59% of Métis planned to take further education toward obtaining a certificate, diploma or degree. Among off-reserve First Nation people, leavers were more likely than completers to report such plans, while the percentages for Métis and Inuit completers and leavers did not differ. As expected, 18- to 24-year-olds were more likely than 25- to 44-year-olds to plan further studies.
- Off-reserve First Nations people and Inuit who were unemployed were more likely to have plans for further schooling than those who were employed or not in the labour force. Among Métis, plans did not differ by labour force status.

## About the Aboriginal Peoples Survey

The 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) is a national survey of Aboriginal peoples aged 6 years and older in Canada - First Nations people living off reserve, Métis, and Inuit. It was designed to be thematic; questions emphasize education and employment, with a health supplement. The APS complements other sources of information, including the Canadian Census of Population and the National Household Survey (NHS).

The 2012 APS was developed by Statistics Canada with funding provided by three federal departments: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Health Canada, and Employment and Social Development Canada.

The 2012 APS sample was drawn from respondents to the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS). The target population was people living in Canada who were aged 6 or older as of February 1, 2012; who identified themselves as First Nations, Métis or Inuit in the 2011 NHS; and who were not living in a First Nations community at the time of the NHS. These are individuals who met any of the following criteria:

- a) Self-report as Aboriginal person (First Nations, Métis, Inuit), or
- b) Report being Status Indian (Registered or Treaty Indian), or
- c) Report being member of a First Nation or Indian Band.

The target population excluded people living on Indian reserves and in Indian settlements in the provinces and in selected First Nations communities in the territories. Sources of data on First Nations people living on reserve include the Census and the NHS and a more in-depth survey (The First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey) led by the First Nations Information Governance Centre (<http://www.fnigc.ca>).

The 2012 APS was conducted from February through July, 2012. The overall response rate was 76%. Detailed information about the APS is available at:

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/APS>

## What you should know about this study

### Population studied

This report presents the results of an analysis of a subset of data from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). The focus is First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit, and Métis aged 18 to 44 who were not attending high school at the time of data collection. By studying a cohort who recently left the school system or who were pursuing postsecondary education, this research can be used to help understand current needs and challenges, and to provide insights for future planning.

Although the APS collected data for First Nations people living off reserve, some respondents may have lived on a reserve and/or attended school on a reserve in the past.

### Aboriginal identity groups

The Aboriginal identity definition is used in this report. In recognition of the uniqueness of each of the three Aboriginal groups, analyses were conducted and reported separately for First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit, and Métis. However, these three groupings are not necessarily mutually exclusive - it was possible to report both single and multiple responses to the Aboriginal identity question on the APS. For example, a respondent could self-identify as both First Nations and Métis. For this study, such respondents would be included in both the First Nations data and the Métis data. However, 99% of off-reserve First Nations, 98% of Inuit, and 98% of Métis respondents reported a single identity.

The analysis is based on 5,418 off-reserve First Nations people, 2,457 Inuit, and 4,787 Métis. About 64% of off-reserve First Nations people were Status or Registered Indians. At the time of the survey, 80% of off-reserve First Nations people and 74% of Métis resided inside a Census Metropolitan Area (an area with a population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core) or Census Agglomeration (an area with an urban core population of at least 10,000); 74% of Inuit resided in one of the four regions collectively known as Inuit Nunangat (Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region).

## What you should know about this study (continued)

### Comparison groups

The main comparison within each Aboriginal group is between high school completers and leavers. Differences between men and women and between two age groups (18 to 24 and 25 to 44) are reported when appropriate. Current place of residence was not analyzed in combination with retrospective data on education experiences, because respondents' place of residence at the time of the APS might differ from where they lived when they were attending school.

### Limitations

High school completion is influenced by students' experiences over many years; the 2012 APS captured experiences at a single point in time (last year in school). For this reason, the cumulative effects of specific factors on school outcomes cannot be analyzed. Moreover, the characteristics of completers and leavers are based on retrospective data, and so are subject to recall bias. In addition, this analysis did not examine all the factors likely to be associated with high school completion. For instance, Aboriginal language knowledge, history of residential school attendance, or regional variations were not explored. Further, the 2012 APS did not measure respondents' family structure (lone- or two-parent family) or family resources (such as family income) when they were attending school; nor did it gather data on "school inputs," such as characteristics of the student body, school resources (expenditures per student, student-teacher ratio, etc.) or school structural characteristics (school size, location, public or private, etc.).

### 2011 National Household Survey

Comparative data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) are sometimes presented in this report. Data on the non-Aboriginal population from the 2011 NHS are for people living off-reserve, and not attending an elementary or high school.

### Estimates

Responses of don't know, refusal, not stated were excluded from the denominators in the calculation of estimates.

Two estimates were considered to be significantly different from one another if their 95% confidence intervals did not overlap. This is a conservative approach, as statistical tests of significance could detect differences even when confidence intervals overlapped.

Estimates with coefficients of variation greater than 16.6% but less than or equal to 33.3% should be interpreted with caution. These are noted <sup>(E)</sup> throughout the report. Estimates with coefficients of variation greater than 33.3% were suppressed.

All estimates from this report are based on survey weights that account for the sample design, non-response and known population totals. A bootstrapping technique was applied when calculating estimates of variance.

### Supporting tables

A series of supporting data tables is available for this report. These tables provide data at the national level for First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit and Métis aged 18 to 44 for all themes covered in this analysis. Selected tables are also available for specific regions of Canada. To obtain the tables, please contact Statistics Canada by email at [sasd-dssea@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:sasd-dssea@statcan.gc.ca) or call 1 (800) 263-1136.



## Part A: The education and employment experiences of First Nations people living off reserve

There is tremendous cultural diversity among First Nations people across the country as indicated by the more than 600 First Nations/Indian bands and over 60 Aboriginal languages reported by First Nations people. According to data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 851,560 people identified as a First Nations person, representing 60.8% of the total Aboriginal population and 2.6% of the total Canadian population. Many First Nations people lived in Ontario and the western provinces, but they made up the largest shares of the total population of the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In 2011, 637,660 First Nations people reported being Registered Indians, representing 74.9% of all First Nations people. Of those who reported being Registered Indians, nearly one-half (49.3%) lived on an Indian reserve or Indian settlement.<sup>1</sup>

The analyses that follow examine the education and employment experiences of First Nations people living off reserve who, at the time of the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), were aged 18 to 44 and were not attending elementary or high school.

### Section 1: Education pathways

Attending high school is the most common means of acquiring a secondary diploma in Canada, but youth can follow different pathways through the education system. Some enter and stay until they graduate, while others drop out. Those who drop out may re-enrol and earn a high school diploma or drop out more than once. Some who leave school before graduation may obtain an equivalency diploma by enrolling in classes offered through adult high schools, community colleges, or distance education programs.

This section looks at the education pathways of off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44. Completers are profiled in terms of variables such as age of completion, path to completion (high school versus equivalency program), and reasons for returning for those with a break in attendance. For leavers, age when last attended school, occurrences of dropping out and reasons for doing so, and current attendance at an equivalency program are examined.

It is important to recognize that some leavers may return to school in the future and obtain high school credentials. Moreover, high school graduation may not be the highest level of educational attainment of either completers or leavers, as some may also have a trades certificate, college diploma, or university degree. Postsecondary credentials are discussed in Section 3.

#### 1. Completers

The majority (72%) of First Nations people aged 18 to 44 living off reserve had completed the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent, according to the 2012 APS. This group is hereafter referred to as "completers." The percentages for men and women did not differ significantly, at 69% and 74%, respectively. A higher proportion of off-reserve First Nations people without Registered Indian status were completers (78%), compared with those with Registered Indian status (69%). Data from the NHS show that 89% of non-Aboriginal people aged 18 to 44 had at least a high school diploma or equivalent in 2011.

#### Average age at high school completion

With the exception of Quebec,<sup>2</sup> the typical student graduates from high school at age 18 (McMullen and Gilmore, 2010). According to the APS, the average age at which off-reserve First Nations completers obtained their high school credentials was 18.4 years. Those who completed an equivalency program (and hence, followed an indirect path to high school completion) were older (22.0 years) when they completed their high school requirements than those who graduated from a high school (18.0 years). This was true for both men and women.

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1 A detailed analysis of the Aboriginal population based on the 2011 NHS is available in *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>).

2 Given the structure of the educational system in Quebec, the typical student will graduate from high school one year younger than those in other provinces.



## Majority obtained diploma through high school

The majority (88%) of off-reserve First Nations completers obtained their high school diploma through attendance at a high school. There were no significant differences by gender.

Most who obtained their high school credentials through an equivalency program did so at an adult high school (45%) or at a college or technical institute (25%). An additional 14%<sup>E</sup> completed the equivalency program at a community center, and 5%<sup>E</sup>, through correspondence or another form of distance education such as on-line learning.

The majority (86%) of off-reserve First Nations completers followed a direct path through school. One in ten left school once, and 5%<sup>E</sup>, more than once. The percentages of male and female completers who finished high school without any breaks in attendance did not significantly differ: 87% and 85%, respectively.

Completers with a break in attendance were asked their main reason for returning to school. The majority (78%) returned because they "realized value of education/wanted a diploma."

## 2. Leavers

In 2012, 28% of First Nations people aged 18 to 44 living off reserve had not completed the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent. This group is hereafter referred to as "leavers." A higher proportion of off-reserve First Nations people with Registered Indian status were leavers (31%), compared with those without status (22%). According to the 2011 NHS, the corresponding figure for the non-Aboriginal population was 11%.

### Age when last attended school

Off-reserve First Nations leavers were, on average, 17 years old when they last attended school. No significant difference was found for male and female leavers.

While the majority (61%) of off-reserve First Nations leavers dropped out once, 39% did so two or more times. The likelihood of multiple departures did not differ significantly for men (36%) and women (41%).

### Men and women drop out for different reasons

Research has shown that reasons for dropping out of school differ by gender. Data from the 2002 Youth in Transition Survey found students of both genders cited school-related reasons most frequently, but females were much more likely to report personal or family reasons, and males more often reported work-related factors (Bushnik, Barr-Telford and Bussière, 2004).

The 2012 APS asked leavers why they left school. If they offered more than one reason, they were asked the "main" reason. Those who dropped out more than once were asked about their most recent departure.

The most common reasons off-reserve First Nations male leavers dropped out were: wanted to work (22%), lack of interest (17%), had to work/money problems (14%), and school problems<sup>3</sup> (12%). Just over one-quarter (26%) of off-reserve First Nations female leavers cited pregnancy or the need to care for their own children as the main reason why they left school. An additional 14% reported they lacked interest.

### One in eight leavers attending equivalency program

At the time of the APS, 12% of off-reserve First Nations leavers were attending a high school equivalency program. The percentages for male and female leavers did not differ significantly: 10% and 15%, respectively. Just under half of them (46%) were enrolled in an adult high school. A further 23%<sup>E</sup> were completing the program through some form of distance education; 15%<sup>E</sup> were doing so at a college or technical institute; and 10%<sup>E</sup>, at a community centre.

3 The category "school problems" includes having problems with school work, with teachers, or being expelled.

## Section 2: Experiences during last year of school

Why some students leave high school before they graduate, while others go on to earn a diploma is not easy to explain. The previous section examined specific reasons for leaving school, which can be viewed as the "proximal" reasons that immediately preceded departure. However, dropping out is not an isolated event that can be attributed to a single cause, but rather, a complex process that is influenced by factors associated with students, their families, the schools they attend, and their communities, the effects of which can begin to emerge in the early years of school attendance (see Rumberger 2011 for a review of the general population literature).

Data from the National Household Survey (NHS) show that in 2011, a larger share of First Nations people had not completed high school, compared with the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2013a). The 2012 APS collected data on factors that might be associated with completing or withdrawing from high school. These factors, while not exhaustive, cover a range of experiences and circumstances that are important from an Aboriginal perspective - at home, in school, and in the community (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

This section describes how First Nations people living off reserve aged 18 to 44 perceived their experiences during their last year of school. It is organized into three subsections. The first describes personal factors that may be associated with completing or leaving high school. The second subsection describes family experiences and support. The third examines the school environment. The guiding research question was, "Do the personal, family, and school-related experiences of high school completers and leavers differ?"

The topics analyzed in this section are based on respondents' recollections, and therefore, may be subject to recall error. Moreover, differences between completers and leavers do not reflect simple "cause-and-effect" relationships with high school graduation; rather, the findings should be interpreted as being "associated with" being a completer or leaver.

### 1. Personal experiences

This subsection explores some aspects of personal lives that are known to be associated with graduating from, or dropping out of, high school. The 2012 APS included the following measures of respondents' personal experiences during their last year in school: educational performance (grades and repeating a grade), student engagement (absenteeism, participation in extracurricular activities, and employment), peers, and changing schools.

#### Completers more likely to have good grades

Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked about their overall grade average in their last year of school. Off-reserve First Nations completers were more likely than leavers to report mainly As (36% versus 19%) or Bs (43% versus 33%) (Chart A2.1). Conversely, leavers were more likely than completers to report mainly Cs (35% versus 17%) or Ds, Es and Fs (14% versus 3%). Female completers were especially likely to report mainly As - 42%, compared with 29% of male completers, 19% of female leavers, and 18% of male leavers.

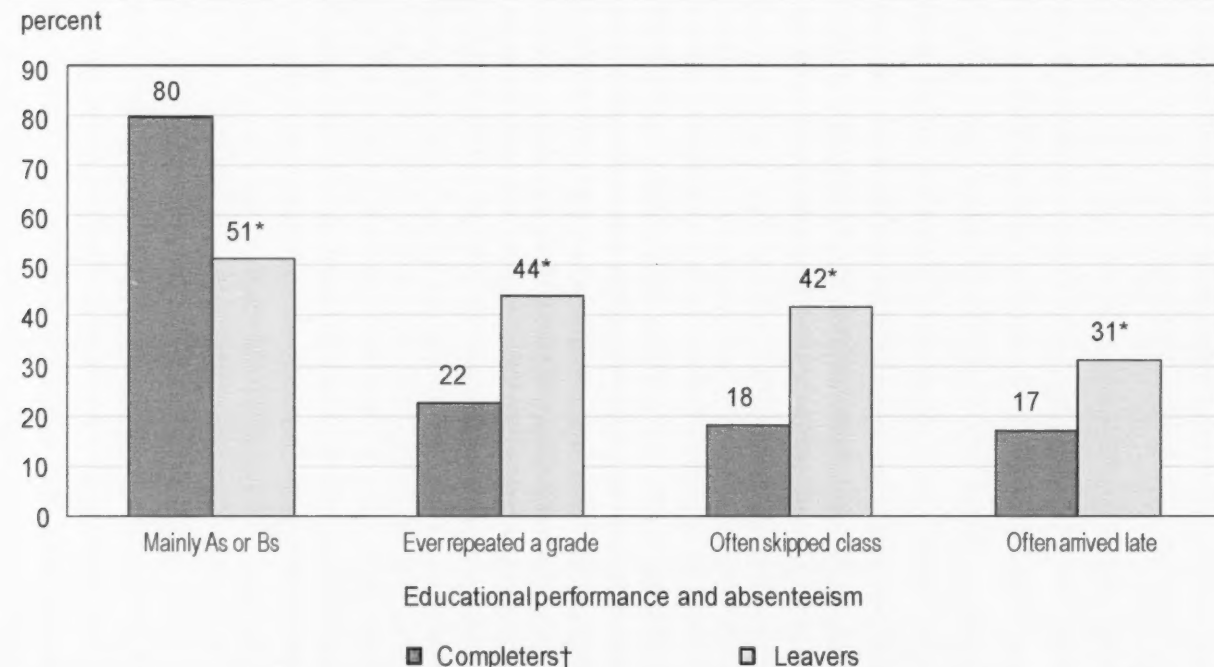
Completers were less likely than leavers to have ever repeated a grade during their elementary or high school years (22% versus 44%) (Chart A2.1). Female completers were the least likely to have repeated a grade - 20%, compared with 27% of male completers, 41% of female leavers, and 47% of male leavers.

#### Skipping classes/Arriving late

Absenteeism behaviours such as skipping classes and arriving late are indicators of school disengagement, which research has shown to be related to dropping out (Rumberger, 2011). Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked how often they skipped classes (without parents' permission) and arrived late during their last year of school. Off-reserve First Nations completers were less likely than leavers to report that, during their last year of school, they "often" skipped classes (18% versus 42%) or "often" arrived late (17% versus 31%) (Chart A2.1).

**Chart A2.1**

**Educational performance and absenteeism in last year of school, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## Extracurricular activities

Participation in extracurricular activities is an indicator of student engagement outside of school hours. Students who participate in extracurricular activities, particularly males involved in sports, are less likely to drop out of school (Rumberger, 2011). Data from the 2006 APS showed that playing sports or taking part in art or music activities at least once a week was associated with higher parent-rated school achievement among off-reserve First Nations children and youth (Bougie, 2009).

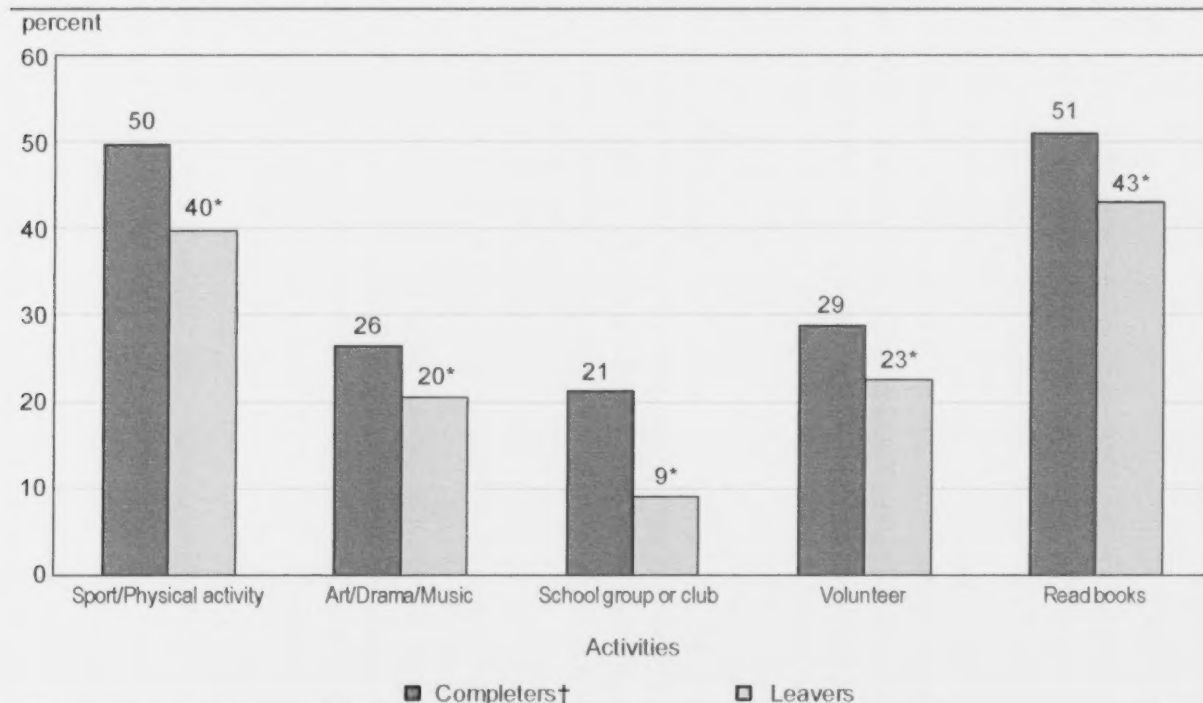
Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked if they participated in any of the following out-of-school activities during their last year of school: a sport or a physical activity or playing organized sports (including taking lessons); an art, drama or music group or club (including taking lessons); a school group or club (such as student council, yearbook or science club) or groups or clubs outside of school; activities related to First Nations, Métis or Inuit culture; spending time with Elders; and volunteering or helping without pay in the community.

Off-reserve First Nations completers were more likely than leavers to have participated in a sport or physical activity (50% versus 40%), in an art, drama or music group (26% versus 20%), or in a school group or club (21% versus 9%) or to have volunteered (29% versus 23%) at least once a week during their last school year (Chart A2.2). Completers and leavers did not differ significantly in the frequency with which they participated in cultural activities (9% and 12%) or in their involvement with Elders (both at 28%).

Male completers were the most likely to have participated in a sport or physical activity at least once a week during their last school year (60%). This compared with 46% of male leavers, 43% of female completers, and 34% of female leavers.

**Chart A2.2**

**Participating at least once a week in extracurricular activities and reading books four or more times a week in last year of school, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Completers read books more often

Analyses of data from the Program for International Student Assessment and the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) have shown that students who dropped out of high school by age 19 had lower reading abilities at age 15 (Knighton and Bussière, 2006). Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked how often they read or looked at books, magazines, comics, etc. outside of school hours in their last year of school. Off-reserve First Nations leavers were less likely than completers to read books four or more times a week: 43% versus 51% (Chart A2.2). At 36%, male leavers were the least likely to read books four or more times a week. This compared with 46% of male completers, 49% of female leavers, and 54% of female completers.

### Completers more likely to work 1 to 3 times a week

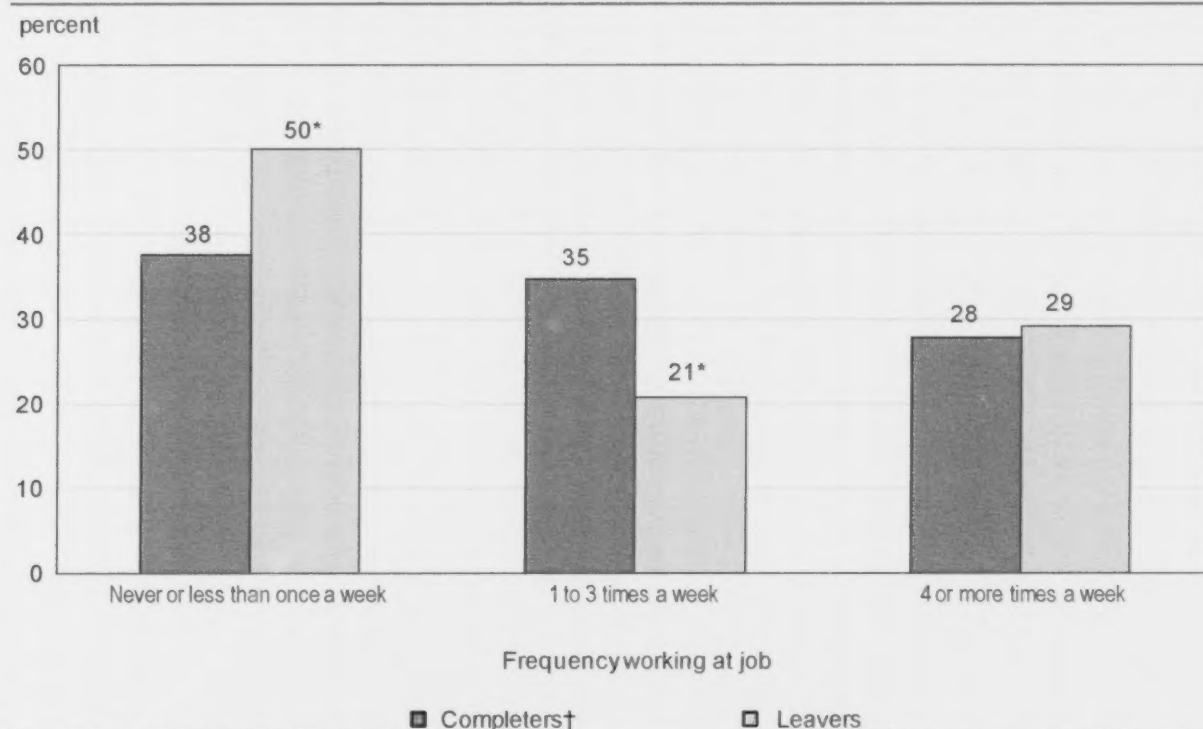
Working while attending high school is not necessarily detrimental to academic outcomes. According to results of the YITS, high school students who worked less than 20 hours a week were less likely to drop out than were those who did not work at all or who worked 30 or more hours a week (Bushnik, 2003). The 2012 APS asked respondents if they worked at a job (such as babysitting, working at a store, or tutoring) during their last year of school, and if so, how many times a week.

Off-reserve First Nations completers were more likely than leavers to report working 1 to 3 times a week (35% versus 21%). Leavers were more likely than completers to report not working or having worked less than once a week (50% versus 38%). The percentages who worked 4 or more times a week did not differ significantly (28% of completers and 29% of leavers) (Chart A2.3).

Male leavers were more likely to report not working or working less than once a week during their last year of school (56%), compared with male completers (43%), female leavers (44%) and female completers (34%). Female completers were the most likely to have worked 1 to 3 times a week - 38%, compared with 30% of male completers, 25% of female leavers, and 16% of male leavers.

**Chart A2.3**

**Working at job in last year of school, by frequency, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2012

### Friends with risk behaviours

Having friends who engage in risk behaviours or who have dropped out of school has been shown to increase the odds that an individual will also leave school (Rumberger, 2011). APS respondents were asked how many of their closest friends during their last year of school skipped classes once a week or more; had a reputation for causing trouble; and smoked cigarettes, used drugs, and drank alcohol. Together, these questions can provide a profile of the number of friends with "risk behaviours."

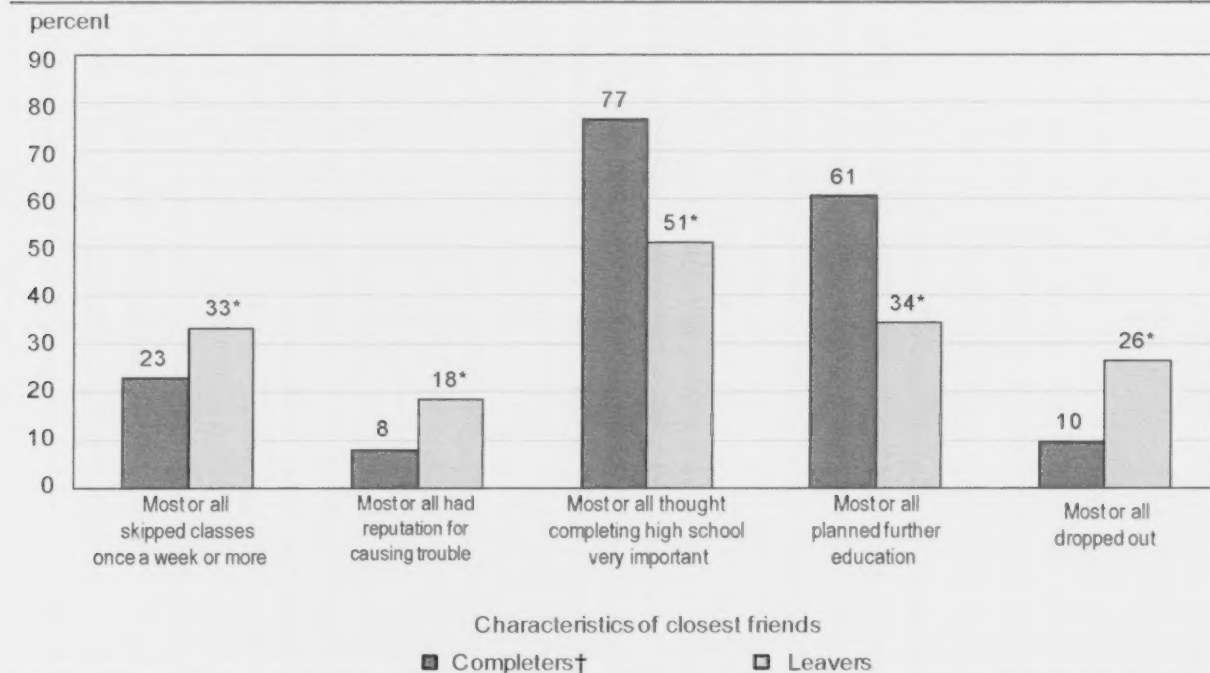
Off-reserve First Nations leavers were generally more likely than completers to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends had risk behaviours. For instance, higher percentages of leavers than completers reported that "most" or "all" of their closest friends skipped classes once a week or more (33% versus 23%) and had a reputation for causing trouble (18% versus 8%) (Chart A2.4). Leavers were also more likely than completers to have many close friends who smoked cigarettes (58% versus 33%) and used drugs (29% versus 15%). The percentages of leavers and completers with many close friends who drank alcohol did not differ significantly (47% and 46%).

Male leavers were the most likely to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends during their last year of school used drugs - 35%. This compared with 23% of female leavers, 17% of male completers, and 14% of female completers.



**Chart A2.4**

**Characteristics of closest friends in last year of school, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Friends with high education aspirations

APS respondents were asked how many of their closest friends during their last year of school thought completing high school was very important; were planning to further their education after high school; thought it was okay to work hard at school; and had dropped out. Together these questions can provide a profile of the number of friends with "high education aspirations."

Off-reserve First Nations completers were consistently more likely than leavers to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends had high education aspirations. For example, 77% of completers versus 51% of leavers had many close friends who thought completing high school was very important (Chart A2.4). Similarly, 61% of completers versus 34% of leavers had many close friends who planned education beyond high school. Completers were also more likely than leavers to have many friends who thought it was okay to work hard at school (60% versus 41%). Conversely, 26% of leavers versus 10% of completers reported that "most" or "all" of their closest friends had dropped out.



## Support from friends

Respondents were asked if at any time during their last year in school they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else. Among off-reserve First Nations people who said they had needed such support, 56% reported having received it from their friends. The percentages of completers and leavers who had received support from friends did not differ significantly (57% and 51%).

## Leavers more likely to change schools frequently

Frequent school changes tend to increase the odds of dropping out. In a British Columbia study, Aman and Ungerleider (2008) found that graduation rates were highest among Aboriginal<sup>4</sup> students who never changed high schools. They also reported that school changes due to regular grade progression (for example, from a middle school to a senior high school) did not affect graduation rates, while school changes for other reasons (for example, residential moves) were associated with lower graduation rates.

APS respondents were asked how many schools they attended from preschool through Grade 6. Off-reserve First Nations completers were less likely than leavers to have changed schools frequently during their early school years: 42% of completers versus 53% of leavers reported they had attended three or more elementary schools.

Respondents were also asked the number of schools they attended starting in Grade 7. Again, completers were less likely than leavers to have attended three or more schools in their high school years: 28% versus 35%.

Those who had attended more than one elementary or high school were asked the reason for the last change. Completers were more likely to cite "regular progression through the school system" than leavers (57% versus 40%). Leavers were more likely than completers to have changed schools because of family moves (34% versus 25%).

## 2. Family-related experiences

The many personal factors that are associated with school outcomes are shaped by the different contexts in which students spend their time. The family is a key context that can influence students and their school achievement. The 2012 APS collected data on family support during respondents' last year of school.

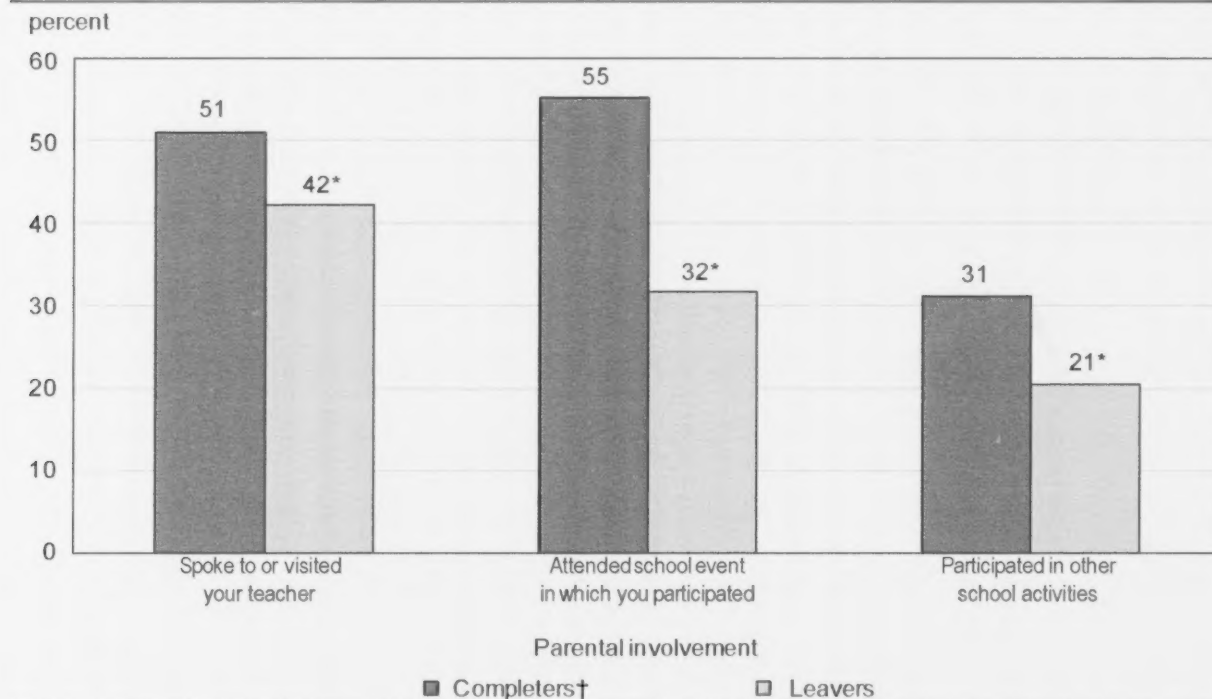
### Completers more likely to have parents who were involved in their school

Respondents were asked if their parents, guardians or other family members did the following during their last year of school: speak to or visit their teachers; attend a school event in which they participated; or participate in any other school activity. Off-reserve First Nations completers were consistently more likely than leavers to report family involvement at school. For example, 55% of completers versus 32% of leavers reported that their parents had attended a school event in which they participated (Chart A2.5).

<sup>4</sup> In this study, "Aboriginal" refers to students who self-identified as being Aboriginal in British Columbia's Ministry of Education data, and thus, may include First Nations (Status and non-Status) Métis, and Inuit students.

**Chart A2.5**

**Parental involvement in last year of school, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Help with homework

Respondents were asked how often their parents, guardians or other family members checked or helped with homework in their last year of school. The percentages of off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers who received help with homework did not differ significantly. For instance, 31% of completers and 27% of leavers reported that their parents checked their homework at least once a week.

### Completers and leavers received support from family

The 2012 APS asked if, at any time during respondents' last year in school, they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else. Among off-reserve First Nations people who had needed such support, 66% reported having received it from their parents, guardians, or other family members. The percentages of completers and leavers who had received support from their family did not differ significantly (69% and 58%).

### Leavers less likely to live with family

The 2012 APS asked respondents if they lived with a parent, guardian or other family members during their last year of school. Close to a third (31%) of off-reserve First Nations leavers did not live full-time with family during their last year of school, compared with 19% of completers.

About 38% of female leavers did not live full-time with family during their last year of school. This was higher than the percentages for male leavers (24%), female completers (22%), and male completers (16%).

### Siblings who dropped out

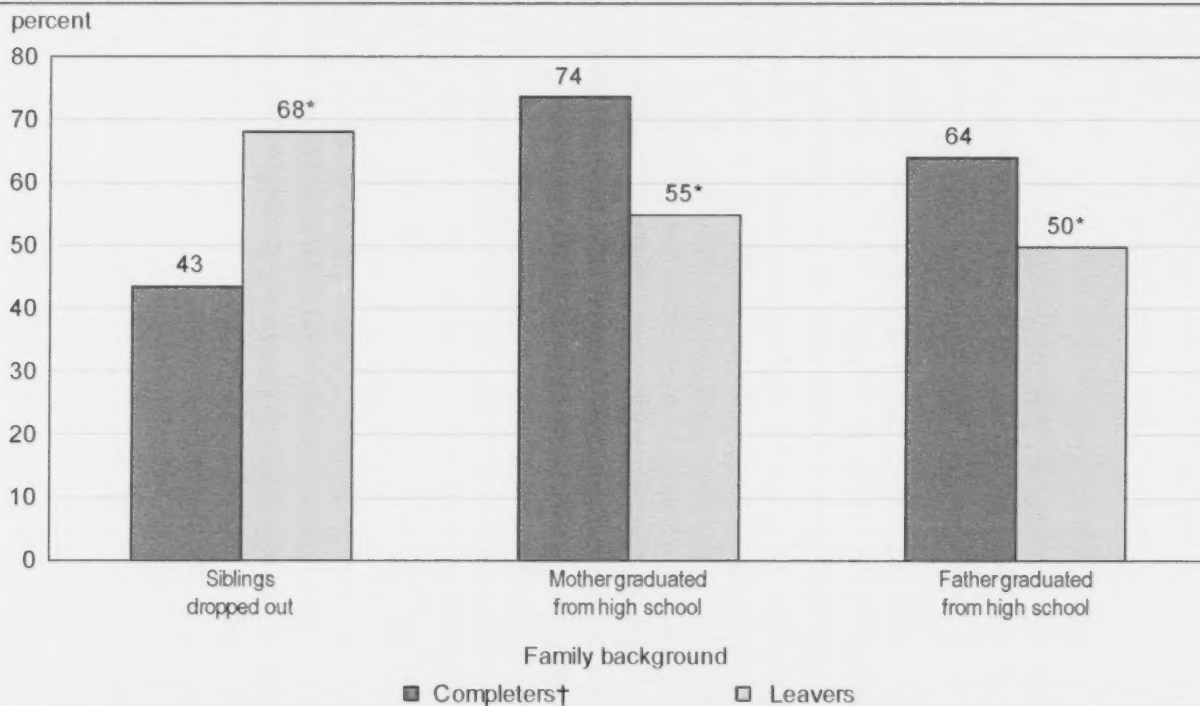
Students with a sibling who left school before completion are more likely to drop out themselves (Rumberger, 2011). The 2012 APS asked respondents if any of their brothers or sisters had ever dropped out of high school. Off-reserve First Nations leavers were more likely than completers to have siblings who had dropped out of school: 68% versus 43% (Chart A2.6).

### Parents who graduated from high school

Parents' education is considered a "human resource" that can influence children's cognitive development, motivation, and educational aspirations (Rumberger, 2011). Respondents were asked the highest level of education that their mother and father had obtained. Completers were more likely than leavers to have parents with at least a high school diploma (Chart A2.6).

**Chart A2.6**

**Having siblings who dropped out and parental education, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### 3. School-related experiences

Along with the family, the school itself can influence students and their academic success. A school's policies and practices can create a climate that may promote or hinder student engagement and achievement.

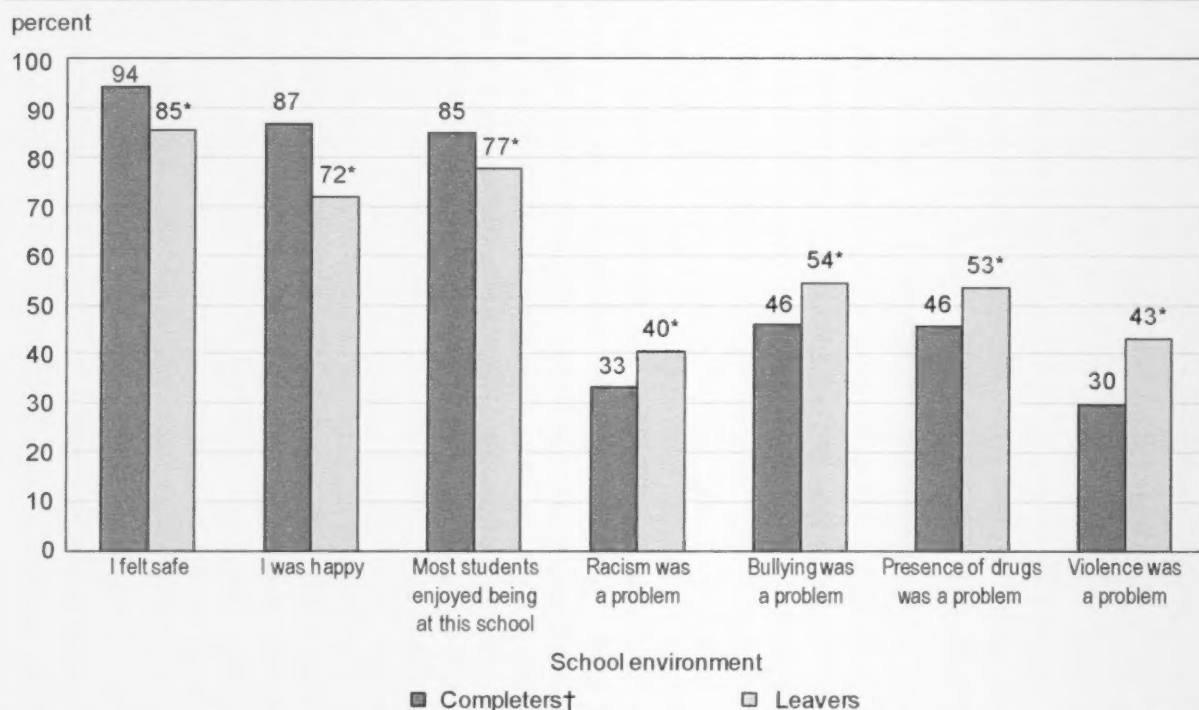
#### School environment

The 2012 APS asked respondents if, during their last year of school, they felt safe and happy at school; if most students at the school enjoyed being there; and if the school offered parents many opportunities to be involved in school activities. Together, these questions constitute a "positive school environment" indicator. Higher percentages of completers than leavers felt safe (94% versus 85%) and happy (87% versus 72%) at their school, and reported that most students enjoyed being there (85% versus 77%) (Chart A2.7). The percentages who said that their school offered parents many opportunities to be involved did not differ significantly: 68% of completers and 62% of leavers.

Respondents were asked if, during their last year of school, racism, bullying, alcohol, drugs, or violence were problems at school. Together, these questions constitute a "negative school environment" indicator. Leavers were more likely than completers to perceive a negative school environment. Higher percentages of leavers than completers reported that racism (40% versus 33%), bullying (54% versus 46%), drugs (53% versus 46%), and violence (43% versus 30%) were problems (Chart A2.7). No significant difference between leavers and completers was observed in alcohol being a problem at their school (27% and 26%).

**Chart A2.7**

**Characteristics of school environment in last year of school, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## School support

The 2012 APS asked respondents if their school supported First Nations, Métis, or Inuit culture (through teaching or activities) during their last year there. The percentages of off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers who said that their school supported their culture did not differ significantly (46% and 50%).

Respondents were also asked if at any time during their last year in school they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else. Among those who had needed such support, 73% received it from teachers, guidance counsellors, or others at school. Completers were more likely than leavers to report receiving support from school staff (76% versus 63%).

## Section 3: Postsecondary education experiences

In recent years, growing percentages of First Nations people have earned postsecondary credentials (CESC, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2008). Data for 2011 from the National Household Survey (NHS) show almost no gap between the First Nations and the non-Aboriginal populations in attainment rates at the trades and college levels; however, the gap at the university level remains wide (Statistics Canada, 2013a). Barriers to completion of postsecondary education for First Nations people living off reserve may include lack of academic preparation, the need to relocate (often from remote to urban areas), lack of financial resources, family responsibilities, and loss of support systems (Malatest et al, 2004; Holmes, 2005).

This section describes the experiences of First Nations people living off reserve in obtaining postsecondary credentials.<sup>5</sup> Because some high school leavers pursued postsecondary studies, comparisons between leavers and completers are made when appropriate.

The first subsection is a postsecondary education profile of off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44.<sup>6</sup> The second focuses on those with postsecondary credentials (trades certificate, college diploma, university certificate below the bachelor's level, university degree). The third subsection concerns those who started but never finished postsecondary education.

### 1. Postsecondary education profile

#### Four in ten with postsecondary credentials

At the time of the 2012 APS, 43% of off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44 had postsecondary credentials; according to the 2011 NHS, the comparable figure for the non-Aboriginal population in the same age range was 64%. An additional 8% of off-reserve First Nations people were attending a postsecondary institution for the first time; 13% had started but did not finish postsecondary studies; and 36% had never attended a postsecondary institution.

In 2012, a higher percentage of off-reserve First Nations women than men had postsecondary credentials (49% versus 36%). Men were more likely than women to have started but not completed postsecondary education (17% versus 10%). The percentages of women and men who were attending a postsecondary institution for the first time did not differ significantly (9% and 7%).

As expected given their age, off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 24 were less likely than those aged 25 to 44 to have postsecondary credentials (20% versus 52%), but were more likely to be currently attending a postsecondary education institution for the first time (20% versus 3%).

<sup>5</sup> The 2012 APS allows for analysis of those who started but never finished postsecondary education. Similar data are not available from the 2011 NHS, as it asked only about the highest certificate, diploma or degree completed. Consequently, results from the two surveys are not directly comparable.

<sup>6</sup> While most individuals aged 18 to 24 would not be expected to have a university degree, the analyses include this age group because they could have obtained a trades certificate or a college diploma.

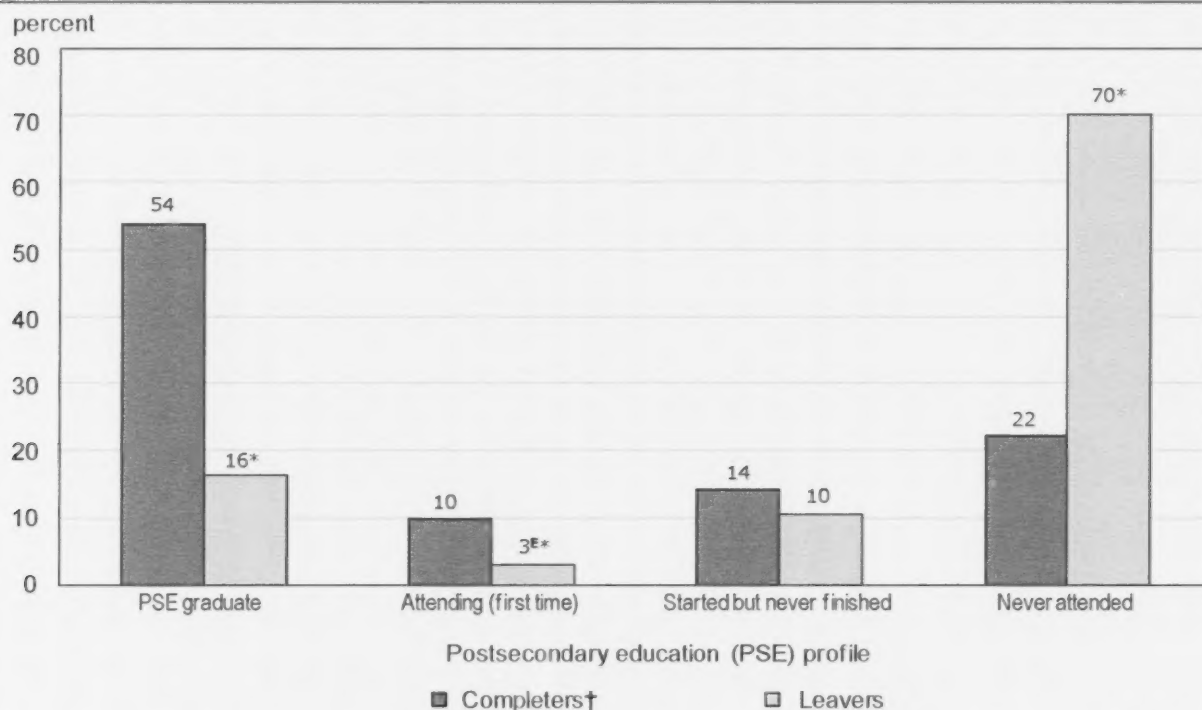


## About one in six leavers have postsecondary credentials

Over half (54%) of off-reserve First Nations high school completers had postsecondary credentials. This percentage was much smaller for leavers but nonetheless, 16% of high school leavers were postsecondary graduates. Completers were also more likely than leavers to be attending a postsecondary institution for the first time (10% versus 3%<sup>E</sup>). The percentages of completers and leavers who had started but never finished postsecondary studies did not differ significantly (Chart A3.1).

**Chart A3.1**

**Postsecondary education profile, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



<sup>E</sup> use with caution

† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## 2. Postsecondary graduates

Among off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44 who were postsecondary graduates, close to half (46%) had a college diploma (13% graduated from a program of less than one year; 23%, from a one- or two-year program; and 10%, from a program of more than two years). A quarter (25%) had a trades certificate; another quarter (25%), a university degree; and 4%, a university certificate below the bachelor's level.

According to the 2011 NHS, the comparable figures for non-Aboriginal postsecondary graduates aged 18 to 44 were 34% for college diplomas, 16% for trades certificates, 43% for university degrees, and 7% for university certificates below the bachelor's level.

Off-reserve First Nations men were more likely than women to have a trades certificate (45% versus 14%), while women were more likely than men to have a college diploma (52% versus 35%) or a university degree (29% versus 17%).



### Leavers graduated from shorter programs

High school completers and leavers tended to graduate from different types of postsecondary programs. Among completers with postsecondary credentials, the most common were a university degree (26%), a college diploma from a one- or two-year program (25%), and a trades certificate (22%). Another 12% graduated from a college program of less than one year; 10%, from a college program of more than two years; and 4%, from a university certificate program below the bachelor's level.

By contrast, among high school leavers with postsecondary credentials, 49% obtained a trades certificate; 22%<sup>E</sup>, a diploma from a college program of less than one year; and 9%<sup>E</sup>, a diploma from a one- or two-year college program.

### Four in ten moved for postsecondary studies

Four in ten (40%) off-reserve First Nations people who had postsecondary credentials had moved to pursue their studies. The likelihood of moving varied with the type of credentials obtained. Six in ten (61%) university degree-holders moved, compared with 28% of those with a trades certificate, 35% with a college diploma, and 37%<sup>E</sup> with a university certificate below the bachelor's level.

As could be expected given the relatively high percentage who had a university degree, high school completers were more likely than leavers to have moved for postsecondary education (42% versus 20%<sup>E</sup>).

### Distance education

Distance education can reduce obstacles to postsecondary education, such as costs or the need to relocate, especially for people in remote areas (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). The 2012 APS asked respondents if they were able to access any of their postsecondary courses through the Internet or another form of distance education, and if they used this method of instruction. About 20% of off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44 who had postsecondary credentials used distance education; 14% had access to but did not use distance education. Two-thirds (66%) of postsecondary graduates reported that they did not have access to distance education, or that it was not applicable to their program or personal situation.

The percentages of high school completers and leavers who used distance education to complete their postsecondary program did not differ significantly (21% and 17%<sup>E</sup>).

Access to and use of distance education were associated with the type of credentials obtained. For instance, 80% of those with a trades certificate did not have access to distance education or reported that it was not applicable to their program or personal situation; this compared with 67% of those with a college diploma, and 54% of those with a university degree. Off-reserve First Nations people with a university degree were the most likely to have used distance education to complete their program - 35%, compared with 18% of those with a college diploma, and 7%<sup>E</sup> of those with a trades certificate.

### Funding

The expenses associated with postsecondary education include not only tuition, but also, the costs of relocation, transportation, housing, food, daycare, and other family responsibilities (Malatest et al, 2004). APS respondents were asked if the money available for their education was sufficient to meet all their needs or expenses. More than one-quarter (28%) of off-reserve First Nations people who had postsecondary credentials reported that they did not have sufficient money.

The percentages of high school completers and leavers who said that they did not have enough money to fund their postsecondary studies did not differ significantly (28% and 30%).

APS respondents were asked to indicate all<sup>7</sup> their sources of funding for postsecondary education. Four in ten (38%) off-reserve First Nations people with postsecondary credentials had applied for and received a government student loan. Other sources included: own savings or working while going to school (61%); grants, bursaries or scholarships (41%); band funding or money from AANDC (39%)<sup>8</sup>; money from family that did not need to be repaid (30%); Employment Insurance or other government funding (23%); bank loan or line of credit (13%); and loan from family (5%).

High school completers were more likely than leavers to fund their postsecondary studies with their own savings or by working while going to school (63% versus 45%), with money from family that did not need to be repaid (33% versus 12%<sup>E</sup>), or with a bank loan or line of credit (14% versus 5%<sup>E</sup>). Leavers were more likely than completers to have received funding from Employment Insurance or other government funding (34% versus 22%).

### 3. Started but never finished postsecondary education

#### Reasons for non-completion

APS respondents who started but never finished postsecondary studies were asked why they did not complete the program. Reasons cited by off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44 included that they got a job or wanted to work (20%); they lost interest or lacked motivation (18%); financial reasons (16%<sup>E</sup>); they were pregnant or caring for their children (8%<sup>E</sup>); they had other family responsibilities (7%<sup>E</sup>); they had moved (6%<sup>E</sup>); or their courses were too hard (4%<sup>E</sup>). The only difference that emerged by gender was the expected exception of "pregnant/caring for own children," which was mentioned more often by women.

#### One-third lacked funds

One-third (36%) of off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44 who started but never finished postsecondary studies said that the money available was not sufficient to meet all their needs or expenses. The percentages of high school completers and leavers who had insufficient money for postsecondary studies did not differ significantly (37% and 30%).

## Section 4: Current employment experiences

Employment rates and employment income of First Nations people have historically been lower than those of the non-Aboriginal population (Bernier, 1997; Wilson and MacDonald, 2010; Pendakur and Pendakur, 2011). Numerous factors have been related to the less favourable labour market outcomes of First Nations people. These include lower educational attainment, insufficient training, lower proficiency in one of the two official languages, lone parenthood, greater geographic mobility, and discrimination (Ciceri and Scott, 2006).

In recent years, the impact of the 2008 recession was greater and persisted longer for Aboriginal workers than for the non-Aboriginal population (Usalcas, 2011). Data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) show a lower employment rate among Aboriginal people, compared with the non-Aboriginal population.

In 2011, 49% of First Nations people were younger than 25, compared with 30% of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2013b). It is important to understand the employment situation that these young First Nations people could encounter as they enter the labour market over the next couple of decades.

This section examines the employment experiences of off-reserve First Nations high school completers and leavers. Particular attention is paid to the role of education on various measures of employment. The first two subsections focus on people who were employed at the time of the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) - their employment profile and their earnings. The final subsection deals with those who were not working and barriers to employment.

7 Percentages for sources of funding do not add to 100% because respondents could indicate more than one source.

8 Band or AANDC funding is available only to those with Registered Indian status. About 64% of respondents who self-identified as First Nations had Registered Indian status.

## 1. Overall labour force profile

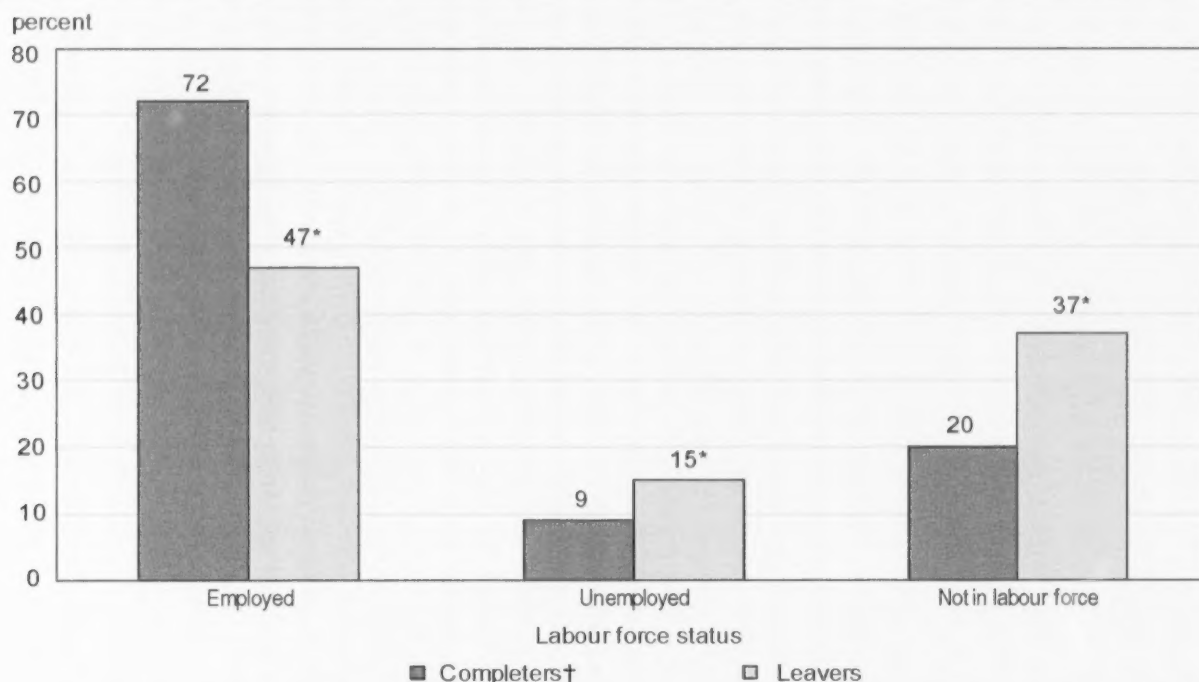
### Completers more likely to be employed

At the time of their 2012 APS interview, 72% of off-reserve First Nations high school completers had a job; 9% were unemployed and looking for work; and 20% were not in the labour force (neither working nor looking for work) (Chart A4.1).

The labour force profile of leavers was different - 47% were employed; 15% were looking for work; and 37% were not in the labour force (Chart A4.1).

**Chart A4.1**

**Labour force status, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012.

## 2. Off-reserve First Nations workers

According to APS data, the higher the level of education of completers and leavers, the more likely they were to be employed. It is important to note that even though they had not completed the requirements for a high school diploma, almost 40% of leavers who were employed had more than a high school education - 8% had a college diploma; 12% had a trades certificate; and 15% had at least some postsecondary education.

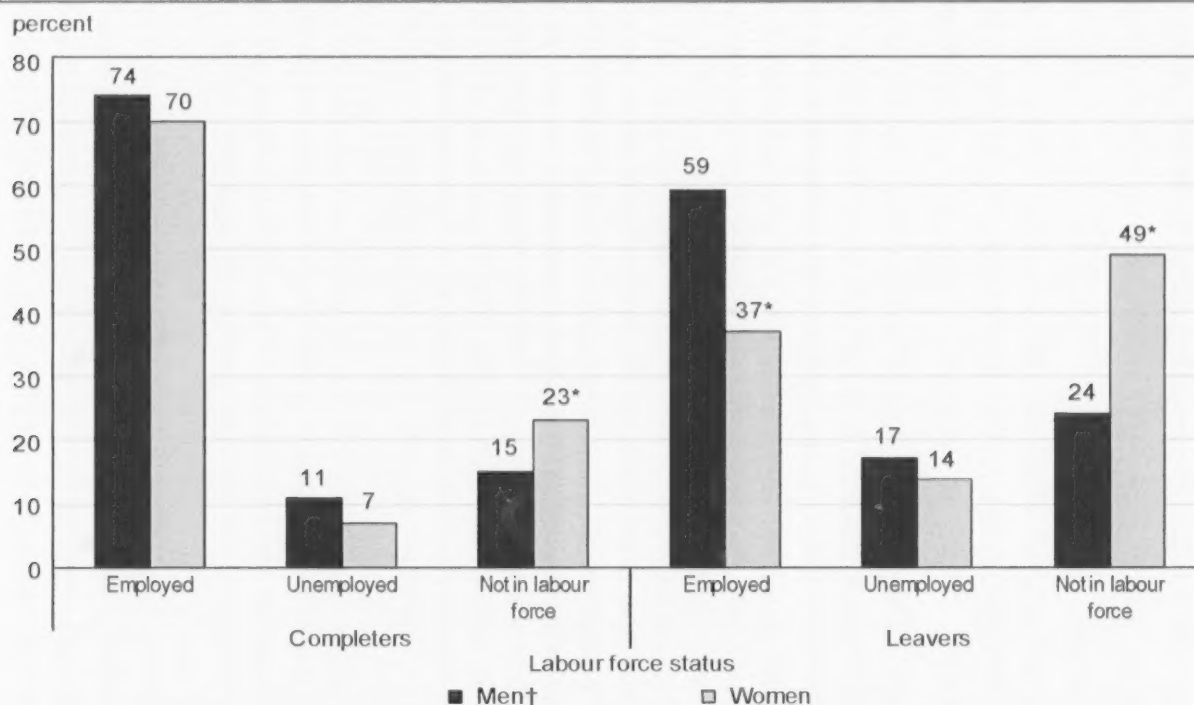
### Male leavers more likely than female leavers to be working

Men usually have higher employment rates than do women. Women often have additional family responsibilities, which can prevent them from fully participating in the labour force (Ferraio, 2010). These differences are reflected among off-reserve First Nations leavers, with men more likely than women to be employed: 59% versus 37% (Chart A4.2). This gap prevailed at most levels of education, except among male and female leavers with a trades certificate or a college diploma, who were equally likely to be employed.

Among completers, women were as likely as men to have a job (70% and 74%). The exception was female completers with a college diploma who were less likely than their male counterparts to be employed (71% versus 85%).

**Chart A4.2**

**Labour force status by sex, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

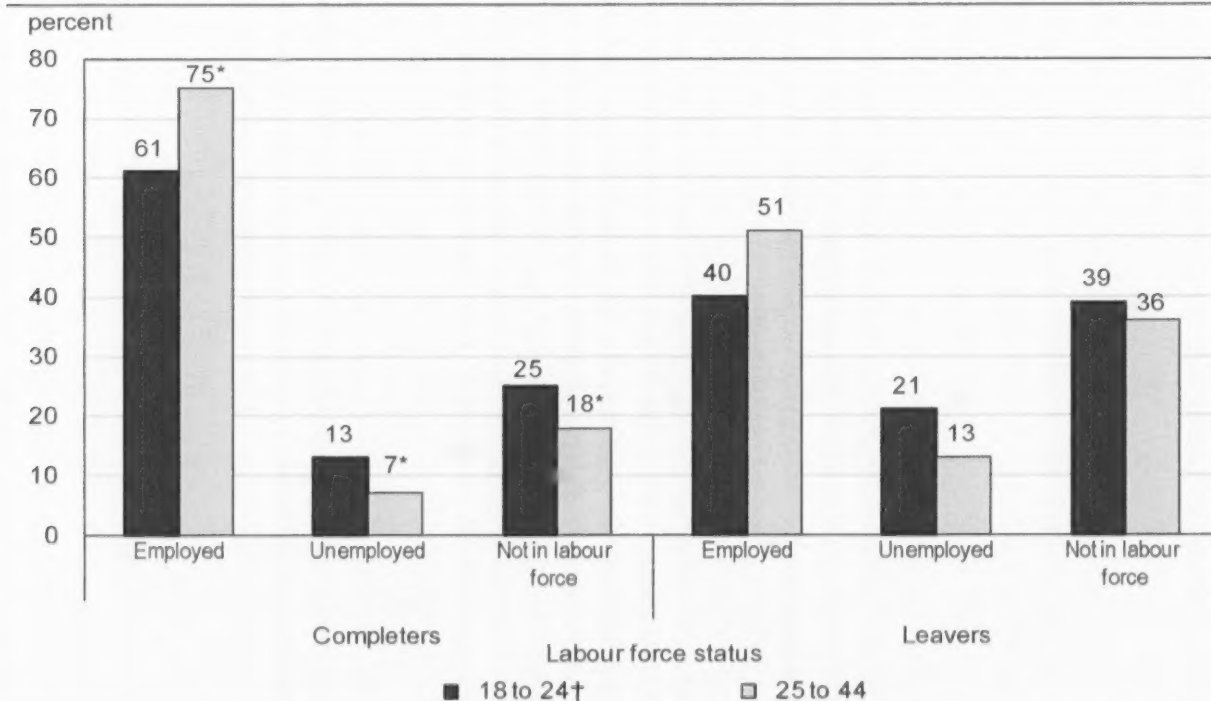
Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Young completers less likely to be employed

Generally, youth have lower employment rates than adults, mainly because many of them are still attending school, and therefore, may be unable or unwilling to hold a job (Shaienks and Gluszynski, 2009; Bernard, 2013). This tendency was reflected among younger and older off-reserve First Nations completers - 61% of completers aged 18 to 24 were employed, compared with 75% of those aged 25 to 44 (Chart A4.3). However, the observed difference between younger and older leavers who were employed (40% and 51%) was not significant.

**Chart A4.3**

**Labour force status by age group, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Majority worked full-time

At the time of their 2012 APS interview, the majority of employed off-reserve First Nations completers (83%) and leavers (82%) were working full time. However, employed men were more likely than employed women to have full-time jobs. Among completers, 91% of men compared with 77% of women worked at least 30 hours a week; the corresponding percentages among leavers were 88% and 72%.

As expected, young off-reserve First Nations workers were less likely to work full time than were those aged 25 to 44: 68% versus 88%. The pattern was the same among completers and leavers.

### Reasons for part-time work

The 2012 APS asked part-time workers the main reason why they were working less than 30 hours a week. Four in ten (38%) worked part time because they could not find full-time work. Leavers were more likely than completers to cite this reason: 56% versus 33%. Another 33% of completers and 8%<sup>E</sup> of leavers worked part time because they were studying at a postsecondary institution.



### Median employment income range

The median employment income range of off-reserve First Nations completers was \$30,000 to \$40,000: \$10,000 higher than that of leavers.<sup>9,10</sup> For completers, higher education translated into higher median income. Completers with no education beyond high school had a median employment income in the \$10,000-to-\$20,000 range; those with some postsecondary reported \$20,000 to \$30,000. Completers with a college diploma or a trades certificate reported median income in the \$30,000-to-\$40,000 range, and those with a university degree, \$40,000-to-\$50,000.

The median employment income for leavers at all levels of schooling was in the \$20,000-to-\$30,000 range. The exception was leavers with some postsecondary education whose median was in the \$30,000-to-\$40,000 range.

Employment income differed for men and women. Generally, women tend to earn less than men because they are more likely to work part time or to have less job seniority as a result of work interruptions to care for family (Ferrao, 2010). Among off-reserve First Nations completers, women reported a median employment income range of \$20,000 to \$30,000, and men, \$40,000 to \$50,000. Among leavers, women's median employment income range was \$10,000 to \$20,000, compared with \$20,000-to-\$30,000 for men.

### 3. Unemployed and not in labour force

Over half (52%) of off-reserve First Nations leavers and 29% of completers were not working at the time of their 2012 APS interview.<sup>11</sup> More specifically, 15% of leavers were unemployed and 37% were not in the labour force; the corresponding figures for completers were 9% and 20% (Chart A4.1).

#### Reasons for not finding a job among unemployed

The most common difficulties cited by off-reserve First Nations people searching for work were a shortage of jobs (60%), lacking the necessary work experience (57%), not having the necessary training and education (50%), and not having transportation (39%).<sup>12</sup>

Unemployed completers and leavers were equally likely to cite job shortages, work inexperience, and no transportation as reasons for not finding a job (Chart A4.4). As expected, leavers were more likely than completers to say that they did not have the appropriate education or training (69% versus 38%).

#### Non-participation in labour force

Many people who are not in the labour force are retirees, homemakers, students or permanently unable to work. Others are waiting for replies from potential employers, waiting to be recalled to a former job, or discouraged as they believe no work is available. On the other hand, some who are not in the labour force do indeed want a job. This was the case for one-third (31%) of off-reserve First Nations people who were not in the labour force.

The 2012 APS asked those who were not in the labour force but wanted a job why they did not look for work. The two main reasons were their own illness or disability (21%<sup>E</sup>) and going to school (18%<sup>E</sup>). One-quarter (26%<sup>E</sup>) of women said they did not look for work because they were caring for children, and 18%<sup>E</sup> of men said they were going to school.<sup>13</sup>

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9. Because personal employment income was reported in ranges, a median income range is calculated. The "median range" is the category for which the cumulative percentage of reporting respondents came closest to 50%.

10. Data pertain only to those who were employed in the week before their APS interview and who reported their personal employment income.

11. It is important to distinguish between the two categories of "not working." Respondents who had actively looked for a job in the previous four weeks are defined as "unemployed"; those who did not work and did not look for work are classified as "not in the labour force."

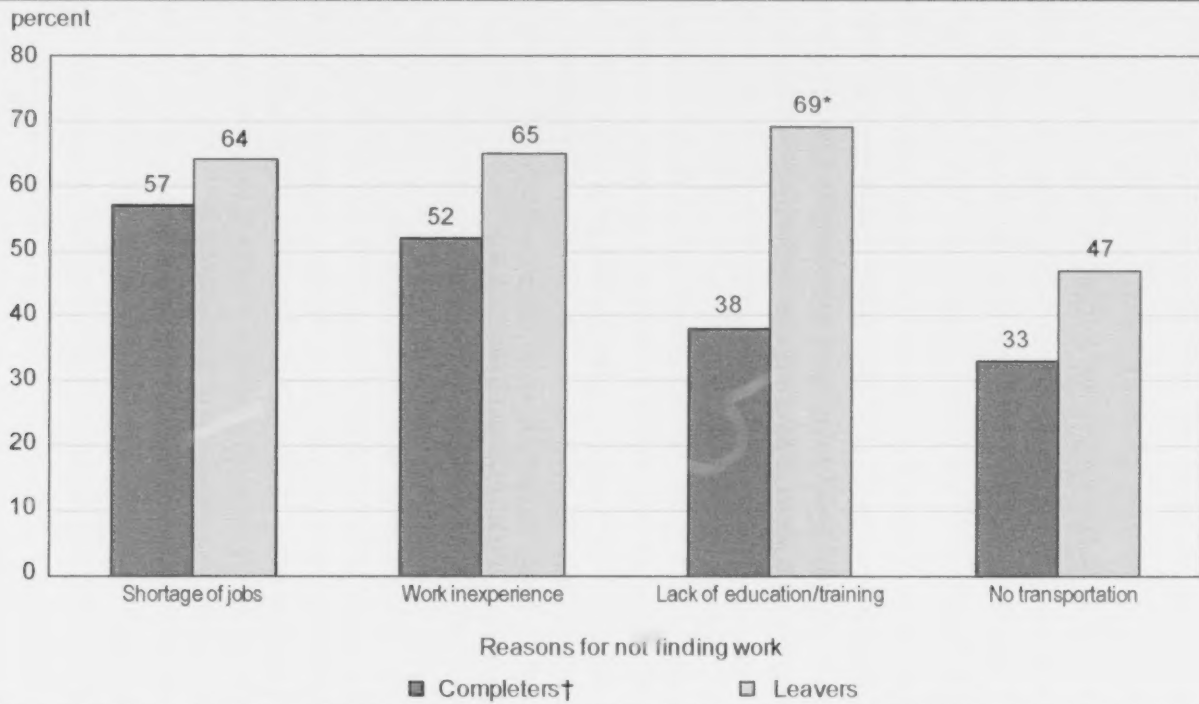
12. Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents could identify more than one reason.

13. The small sample size precludes further analysis by completion status and age.



**Chart A4.4**

**Selected reasons for not finding work among unemployed, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012.

## Section 5: Further education or training

The previous sections examined respondents' past education experiences and their employment status at the time of the survey. The 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) also asked off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44 questions about their future education plans and obstacles to additional schooling.

Barriers such as cost, time constraints and family responsibilities can prevent people from taking the education or training they would like. Aboriginal students are particularly likely to face challenges in furthering their education (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). Some, for example, may lack financial resources, or be unaware of help available through student aid programs. Other barriers may include skepticism about the employment benefits of additional education (which can lead to motivational issues), and experienced or perceived racism (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

### Barriers to further education or training

According to the APS, the factors that prevent off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44 from taking further education or training differed for high school leavers and completers. As well, differences by gender and age group emerged for certain barriers.

Leavers were more likely than completers to report that they lacked the confidence or felt unprepared to further their schooling - 42% identified this as a barrier, compared with 20% of completers (Chart A5.1). Leavers were also more likely than completers to report that furthering their education was not a personal priority (45% versus 25%).

As discussed earlier, the most frequent reason why female leavers dropped out of school was pregnancy or childcare responsibilities. Consistent with this finding, 62% of female leavers reported that personal or family responsibilities prevented them from taking further education. Female completers (36%), male leavers (38%) and male completers (24%) were less likely to cite this as a barrier.

Leavers were more likely than completers to report that time constraints (too busy, no time to study) kept them from taking further education or training: 36% versus 22% among men, and 40% versus 25% among women. As well, 40% of leavers aged 25 to 44 cited time constraints as an impediment, compared with 26% of completers in this age range. The figures among 18- to 24-year-olds were 35% for leavers and 18% for completers.

Financial considerations usually play a role in continuing education. Leavers were more likely than completers to report costs were a barrier (42% versus 34%), but this reflected the results for men (43% versus 30%). The percentages among women were not significantly different (41% and 36%).

Young completers were the least likely to report that costs kept them from further schooling. A quarter (27%) of completers aged 18 to 24 identified this barrier, compared with 41% of leavers in this age group, and 42% of leavers and 36% of completers aged 25 to 44.

Leavers were also more likely than completers to report that the courses that were available did not match their needs (26% versus 19%). As with cost, this reflected the results for men (29% versus 18%); the percentages for women did not differ significantly (23% and 20%). As well, leavers aged 25 to 44 were more likely than completers in this age range to report this barrier (26% versus 19%). The figures among 18- to 24-year-olds were not significantly different at 25% for leavers and 21% for completers.

Off-reserve First Nations female leavers were the most likely to report that their personal health prevented them from taking further education or training – 29%. This compared with 10% of female completers, 13% of male leavers, and 9%<sup>E</sup> of male completers.

### Two-thirds plan further education

Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked if they had plans to "take any other education that could be counted towards a certificate, diploma or degree from an educational institution."<sup>14</sup> Two-thirds (65%) of off-reserve First Nations people aged 18 to 44 reported such plans; an additional 4% were uncertain. While leavers were more likely than completers to plan further education (70% versus 63%), the majority of both groups had such plans.

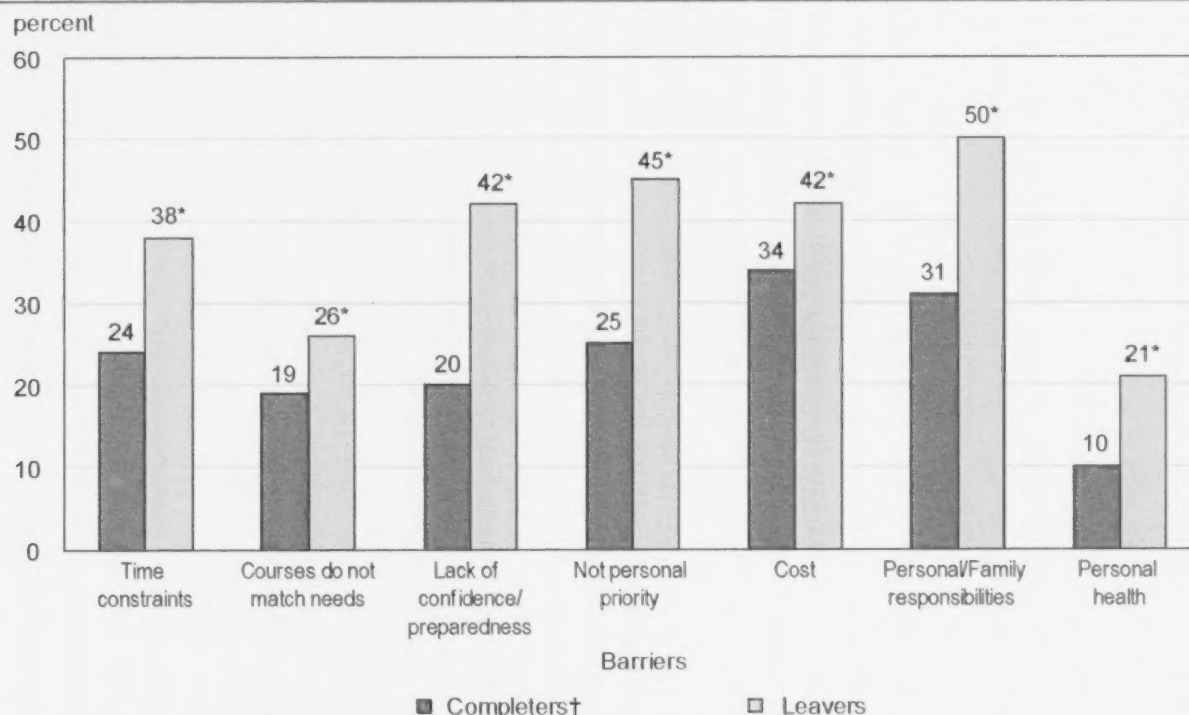
The percentages of male leavers and completers who planned further education did not differ significantly (64% and 61%), but among women, leavers were more likely than completers to report that they planned to continue their education (75% versus 64%). As expected, 18- to 24-year-olds were more likely than those aged 25 to 44 to report plans for additional schooling (79% versus 59%).

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<sup>14</sup> For respondents attending a postsecondary institution at the time of their APS interview, this referred to education beyond their current studies.

**Chart A5.1**

**Barriers to further education or training, off-reserve First Nations completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Unemployed more likely to plan further education

Off-reserve First Nations people who were unemployed were more likely to plan further education (78%) than were those who were employed (63%) or not in the labour force (66%). This finding reflected the situation among men; the percentages of women who were unemployed or not in the labour force who reported plans for further education did not differ significantly.

At ages 18 to 24, the percentages of those who were employed, unemployed or not in the labour force with plans to further their schooling did not differ significantly. However, employed 25- to 44-year-olds (57%) were less likely than their unemployed (74%) counterparts to have such plans, while the percentage for those who were not in the labour force (62%) did not significantly differ from the employed or unemployed.

## Part B: The education and employment experiences of Inuit

Inuit in Canada have a unique culture, core knowledge and beliefs (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2013). They have a homeland that covers almost one-third of Canada, from eastern Yukon to the North tip of Ellesmere Island to the eastern coast of Labrador. According to data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 59,445 people identified as Inuit. They represented 4.2% of the total Aboriginal population and 0.2% of the total Canadian population. Almost three-quarters of Inuit in Canada lived in Inuit Nunangat, which stretches from Labrador to the Northwest Territories and comprises four regions: Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.<sup>15</sup>

The analyses that follow examine the education and employment experiences of Inuit who, at the time of the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), were aged 18 to 44 and were not attending elementary or high school.

### Section 1: Education pathways

Attending high school is the most common means of acquiring a secondary diploma in Canada, but youth can follow different pathways through the education system. Some enter and stay until they graduate, while others drop out. Those who drop out may re-enrol and earn a high school diploma or drop out more than once. Some who leave school before graduation may obtain an equivalency diploma by enrolling in classes offered through adult high schools, community colleges, or distance education programs.

This section looks at the education pathways of Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44. Completers are profiled in terms of variables such as age of completion, path to completion (high school versus equivalency program), and reasons for returning for those with a break in attendance. For leavers, age when last attended school, occurrences of dropping out and reasons for doing so, and current attendance at an equivalency program are examined.

It is important to recognize that some leavers may return to school in the future and obtain high school credentials. Moreover, high school graduation may not be the highest level of educational attainment of either completers or leavers, as some may also have a trades certificate, college diploma, or university degree. Postsecondary credentials are discussed in Section 3.

#### 1. Completers

About four in ten (42%) Inuit aged 18 to 44 had completed the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent in 2012. This group is hereafter referred to as "completers." Women were more likely than men to have such credentials (46% versus 36%). Data from the NHS show that 89% of the non-Aboriginal population aged 18 to 44 had at least a high school diploma or equivalent in 2011.

#### Average age at high school completion

With the exception of Quebec,<sup>16</sup> the typical student graduates from high school at age 18 (McMullen and Gilmore, 2010). According to the APS, the average age at which Inuit completers obtained high school credentials was 18.3 years. Those who completed an equivalency program (and hence, followed an indirect path to high school completion) were older (19.8) when they earned their high school diploma than were those who graduated from a high school (18.1). This was true for both men and women.

15. A detailed analysis of the Aboriginal population based on the 2011 NHS is available in *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>).

16. Given the structure of the educational system in Quebec, the typical student will graduate from high school one year younger than those in other provinces.

### Majority obtained diploma through high school

The majority (85%) of Inuit completers obtained their high school diploma through attendance at a high school. There were no significant differences by gender.

About four in 10 (42%) who obtained a high school diploma through an equivalency program did so at an adult high school. An additional 31%<sup>E</sup> attended a community centre, and 17%<sup>E</sup> completed the requirements at a college or technical institute.

The majority (85%) of Inuit completers followed a direct path through school. One in ten left once, and 5%, more than once. The percentages of men and women who completed high school without any breaks in attendance did not differ significantly: 87% and 84%, respectively.

Inuit completers with a break in school attendance were asked their main reason for returning. The majority (70%) returned because they "realized value of education/wanted a diploma."

### 2. Leavers

In 2012, 58% of Inuit aged 18 to 44 had not completed the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent. This group is hereafter referred to as "leavers." Data from the 2011 National Household Survey show that the corresponding figure for the non-Aboriginal population was 11%.

#### Age when last attended school

Inuit leavers were, on average, 17.1 years old when they last attended school. No significant difference was found for male and female leavers.

While the majority (66%) of Inuit leavers dropped out once, 34% dropped out at least twice. Female leavers were more likely than male leavers to have dropped out multiple times: 40% versus 28%.

#### Men and women drop out for different reasons

Research has shown that reasons for dropping out of school differ by gender. Data from the 2002 Youth in Transition Survey found students of both genders cited school-related reasons most frequently, but females were much more likely to report personal or family reasons, and males more often reported work-related factors (Bushnik, Barr-Telford and Bussière, 2004).

Respondents to the 2012 APS who dropped out were asked why they left school before completion. If they offered more than one reason, they were asked the "main" reason. Those who dropped out more than once were asked about their most recent departure.

According to the 2012 APS, the reasons that Inuit male leavers dropped out of school included the following: school problems<sup>17</sup> (22%), lack of interest (15%), and wanted to work (11%). Female leavers' main reason for dropping out was pregnancy/need to care for their own children - 38%.

#### Few leavers attending equivalency program

At the time of the APS, 5%<sup>E</sup> of Inuit leavers were attending a high school equivalency program. The percentages for male and female leavers did not differ significantly: 3%<sup>E</sup> and 8%<sup>E</sup>, respectively. More than half of them (52%<sup>E</sup>) were enrolled at an adult high school.

17. The category 'school problems' includes having problems with school work, with teachers, or being expelled.



## Section 2: Experiences during last year of school

Why some students leave high school before they graduate, while others go on to earn a diploma is not easy to explain. The previous section examined specific reasons for leaving school, which can be viewed as the "proximal" reasons that immediately preceded departure. However, dropping out is not an isolated event that can be attributed to a single cause, but rather, a complex process that is influenced by factors associated with students, their families, the schools they attend, and their communities, the effects of which can begin to emerge in the early years of school attendance (see Rumberger 2011 for a review of the general population literature).

Data from the National Household Survey (NHS) show that in 2011, a larger share of Inuit had not completed high school, compared with the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2013a). The 2012 APS collected data on factors that might be associated with completing or withdrawing from high school. These factors, while not exhaustive, cover a range of experiences and circumstances that are important from an Aboriginal perspective - at home, in school, and in the community (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

This section describes how Inuit aged 18 to 44 perceived their experiences during their last year of school. It is organized into three subsections. The first describes personal factors that may be associated with completing or leaving high school. The second subsection describes family experiences and support. The third examines the school environment. The guiding research question was, "Do the personal, family, and school-related experiences of high school completers and leavers differ?"

The topics analyzed in this section are based on respondents' recollections, and therefore, may be subject to recall error. Moreover, differences between completers and leavers do not reflect simple "cause-and-effect" relationships with high school graduation; rather, the findings should be interpreted as being "associated with" being a completer or leaver.

### 1. Personal experiences

This section explores some aspects of personal lives that are known to be associated with graduating from, or dropping out of, high school. The 2012 APS included the following measures of respondents' personal experiences during their last year in school: educational performance (grades and repeating a grade), student engagement (absenteeism, participation in extracurricular activities, and employment during high school), peers, and changing schools.

#### Completers more likely to have good grades

Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked about their overall grade average in their last year of school. Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to report mainly As (36% versus 20%) or Bs (43% versus 31%) (Chart B2.1). Conversely, leavers were more likely than completers to report mainly Cs (29% versus 18%) or mainly Ds, Es, and Fs (20% versus 3%<sup>E</sup>).

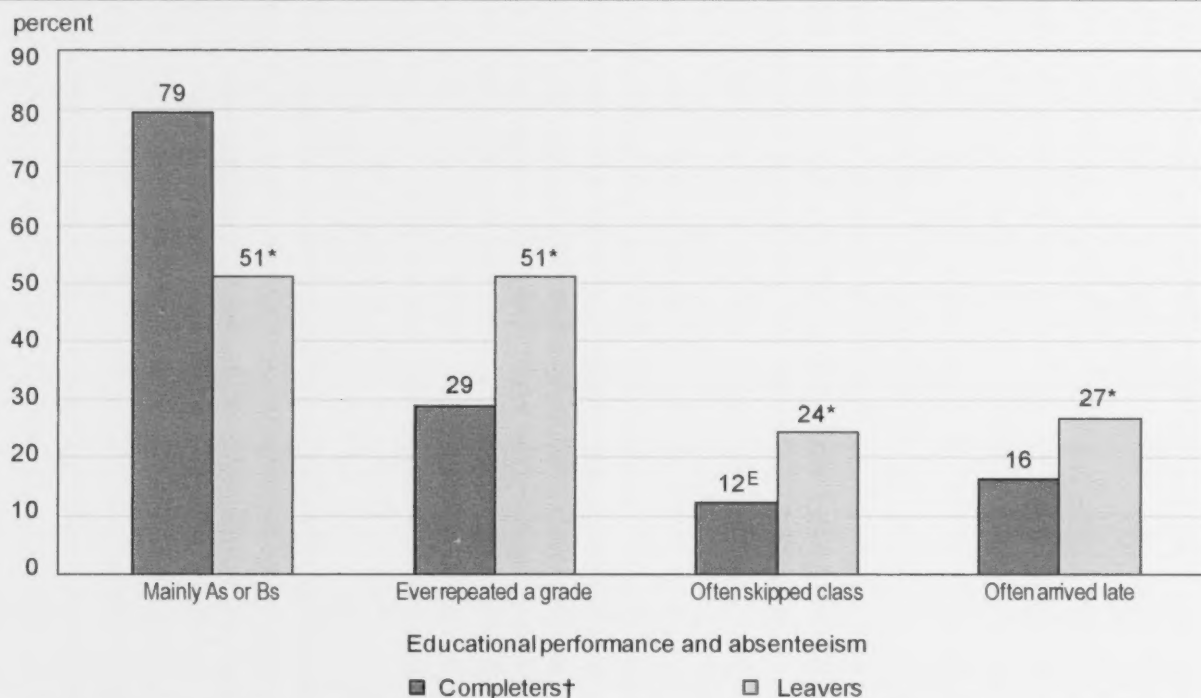
Leavers were more likely than completers to have ever repeated a grade during their elementary or high school years (51% versus 29%) (Chart B2.1). Male leavers were especially likely to have repeated a grade - 57%, compared with 45% of female leavers, 30% of male completers, and 28% of female completers.

#### Skipping classes/Arriving late

Absenteeism behaviours such as skipping classes and arriving late are indicators of school disengagement, which is related to dropping out (Rumberger, 2011). Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked how often they skipped classes (without parents' permission) and arrived late during their last year of school. Inuit completers were less likely than leavers to report that they "often" skipped classes (12%<sup>E</sup> versus 24%) or that they "often" arrived late (16% versus 27%) (Chart B2.1).

**Chart B2.1**

**Educational performance and absenteeism in last year of school, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



<sup>E</sup> use with caution

† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

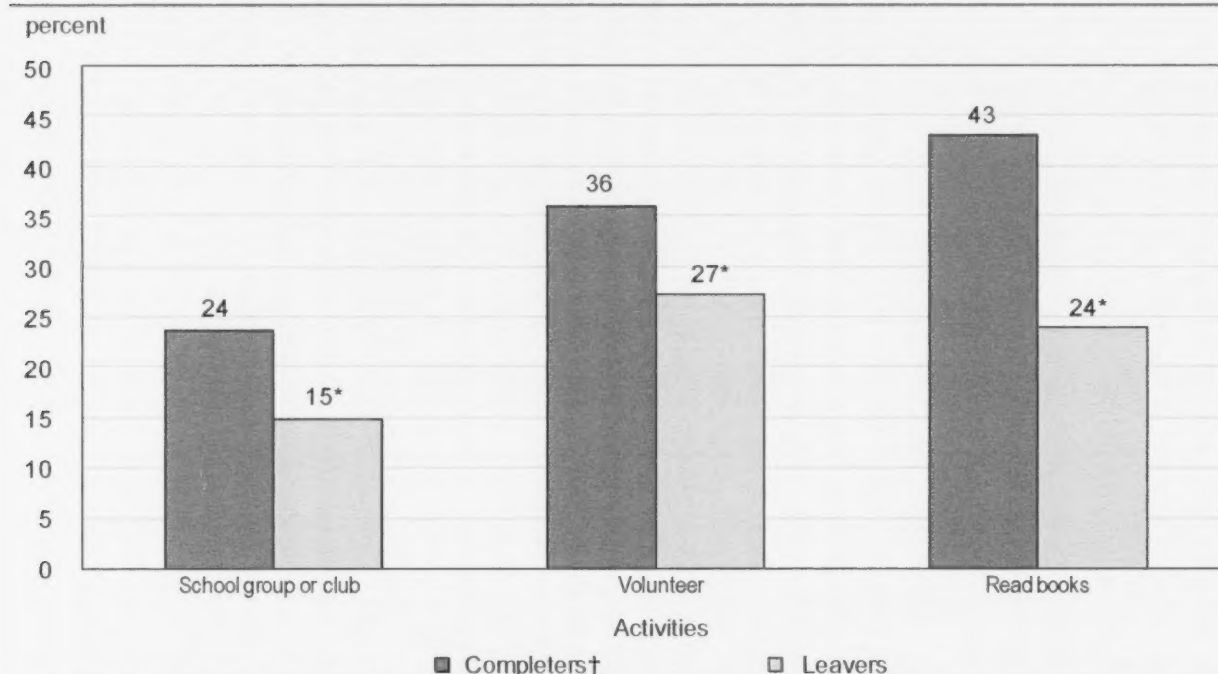
## Extracurricular activities

Participation in extracurricular activities is an indicator of student engagement outside of school hours. Students who participate in extracurricular activities, especially males involved in sports, are less likely to drop out (Rumberger, 2011). Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked if they participated in any of the following out-of-school activities during their last year of school: a sport or a physical activity or playing organized sports (including taking lessons); an art, drama or music group or club (including taking lessons); a school group or club (such as student council, yearbook or science club) or groups or clubs outside of school; activities related to First Nations, Métis or Inuit culture; spending time with Elders; and volunteering or helping without pay in the community.

Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to have participated in a school group or club (24% versus 15%) and to have volunteered (36% versus 27%) at least once a week in their last school year (Chart B2.2). Leavers were more likely than completers to have participated in cultural activities (36% versus 22%). The percentages of completers and leavers who participated in sport- (62% and 60%) and art- (28% and 30%) related activities and who were involved with Elders (38% and 46%) did not differ significantly.

**Chart B2.2**

**Participating at least once a week in extracurricular activities and reading books four or more times a week in last year of school, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Completers read books more often

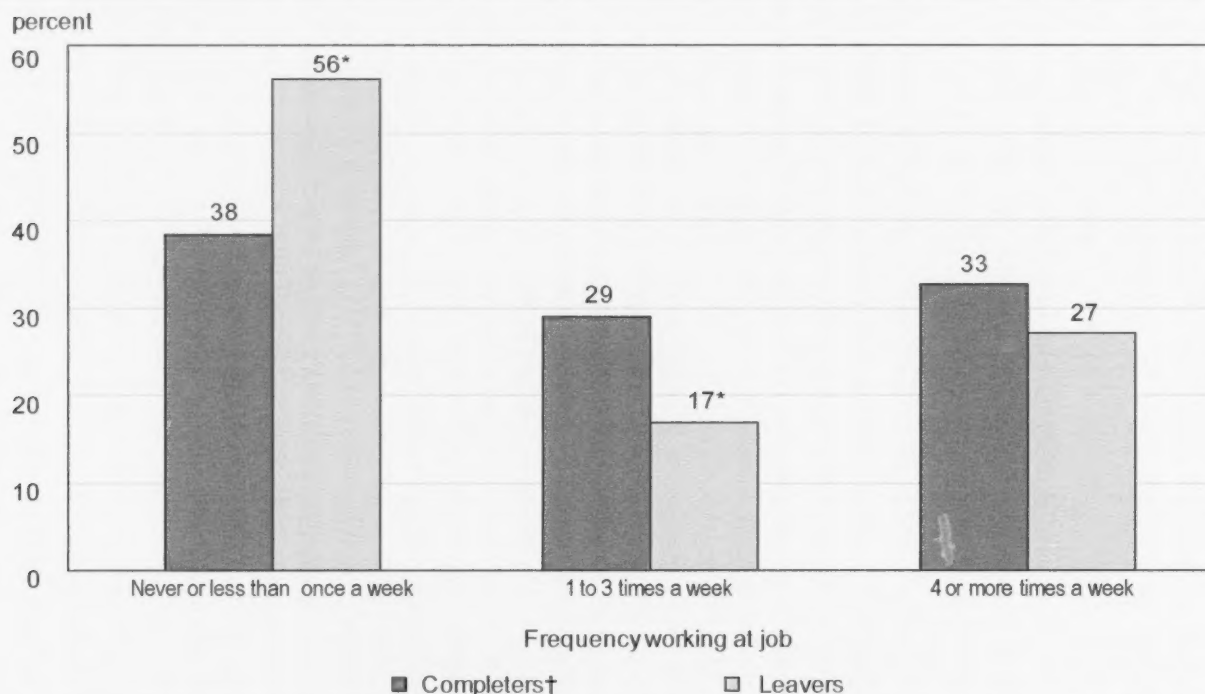
Analyses of data from the Program for International Student Assessment and the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) have shown that students who dropped out of high school by age 19 had lower reading abilities at age 15 (Knighton and Bussière, 2006). The 2012 APS asked respondents how often they read or looked at books, magazines, comics, etc. outside of school hours in their last year of school. Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to report that they read books four or more times a week (43% versus 24%) (Chart B2.2).

### Completers more likely to work 1 to 3 times a week

Working while attending high school is not necessarily detrimental to academic outcomes. According to results of the YITS, high school students who worked less than 20 hours a week were less likely to drop out than were those who did not work at all or who worked 30 or more hours a week (Bushnik, 2003). The 2012 APS asked respondents if they worked at a job (such as babysitting, working at a store, or tutoring) during their last year of school, and if so, how many times a week.

A higher percentage of Inuit completers than leavers reported working at a job 1 to 3 times a week during their last year of school (29% versus 17%). Leavers were more likely than completers to not work or to work less than once a week (56% versus 38%). The percentages of completers and leavers who worked 4 or more times a week did not differ significantly (33% and 27%) (Chart B2.3).

**Chart B2.3**  
**Working at job in last year of school, by frequency, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012.

Female completers were the most likely to have worked 1 to 3 times a week during their last year of school - 36%, compared with 19% of male completers, 18% of female leavers, and 15% of male leavers.

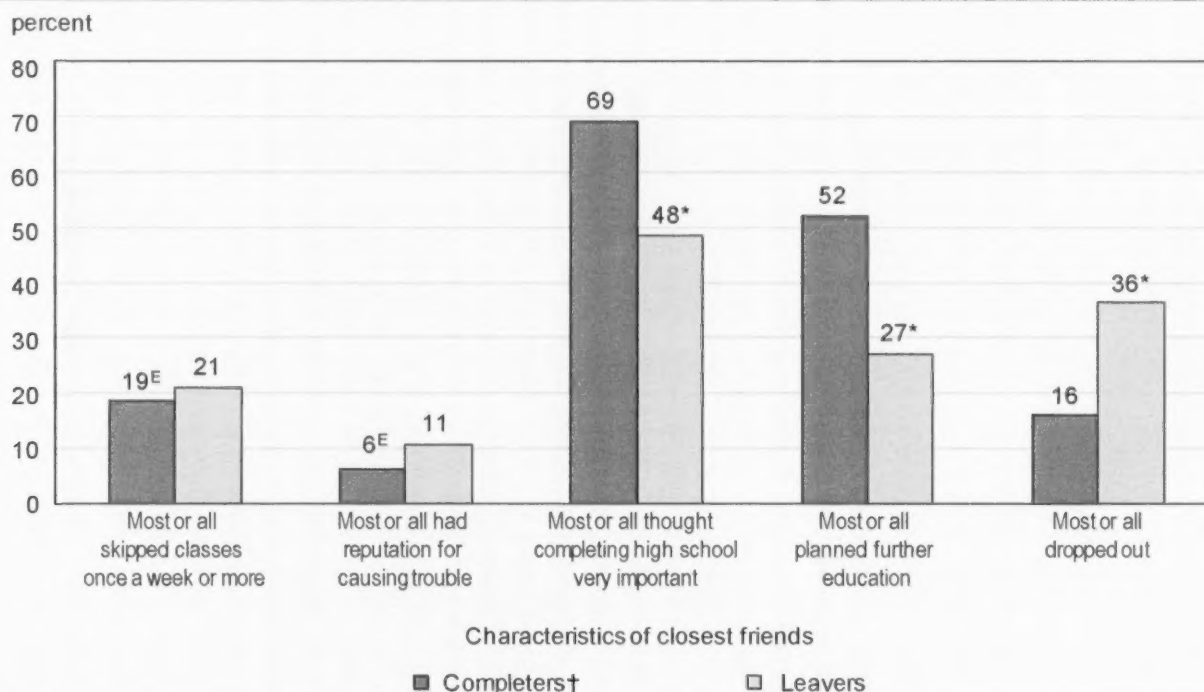
### Friends with risk behaviours

Having friends who engage in risk behaviours or who have dropped out have been shown to increase the odds that an individual will also leave school (Rumberger, 2011). APS respondents were asked how many of their closest friends during their last year of school skipped classes once a week or more; had a reputation for causing trouble; and smoked cigarettes, used drugs, and drank alcohol. Together, these questions can provide a profile of the number of friends with "risk behaviours."

Inuit had mixed recollections about the risk behaviours of their friends. The percentages of completers and leavers reporting that "most" or "all" of their closest friends skipped classes once a week or more (19%<sup>E</sup> and 21%), had a reputation for causing trouble (6%<sup>E</sup> and 11%), and used drugs (16% and 18%) did not differ significantly (Chart B2.4). However, while Inuit leavers were more likely than completers to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends smoked cigarettes (64% versus 53%), Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends drank alcohol (35% versus 22%).

**Chart B2.4**

**Characteristics of closest friends in last year of school, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



<sup>E</sup> use with caution

† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Friends with high education aspirations

APS respondents were asked how many of their closest friends during their last year of school thought completing high school was very important; were planning to further their education after high school; thought it was okay to work hard at school; and had dropped out. Together, these questions can provide a profile of the number of friends with "high education aspirations."

Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends had high education aspirations. For example, 69% of completers, compared with 48% of leavers, had many close friends who thought completing high school was very important. Similarly, 52% of completers versus 27% of leavers had many close friends who planned education beyond high school. Conversely, 36% of leavers reported that "most" or "all" of their closest friends had dropped out, compared with 16% of completers (Chart B2.4). The percentages of completers and leavers with many friends who thought it was okay to work hard at school did not differ significantly (59% and 52%).

### Support from friends

Respondents were asked if they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else during their last year in school. Among Inuit who said they had needed such support, 62% reported having received it from their friends. The percentages of completers and leavers who had received support from their friends did not differ significantly (58% and 66%).



## Completers more likely to change schools frequently

Frequent school changes tend to increase the odds of dropping out. In a British Columbia study, Aman and Ungerleider (2008) reported that graduation rates were highest among Aboriginal<sup>18</sup> students who never changed high schools. They also found that school changes due to regular grade progression (for example, from a middle school to a senior high school) did not affect completion rates, but school changes for other reasons (for example, residential moves) were associated with lower completion rates. This observation is especially relevant to education in Inuit Nunangat, where frequent school changes may be part of regular grade progression because of a lack of schools in some areas. In fact, school mobility may have a different meaning for Inuit students than for other populations. The 2012 APS offers a unique opportunity to look at the relationship between school mobility and graduation among the Inuit.

APS respondents were asked how many schools they attended from preschool through Grade 6. Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to have changed schools frequently during their elementary school years: 25% versus 12% reported they had attended three or more elementary schools.

Respondents were also asked how many schools they attended starting in Grade 7. Again, Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to have changed schools frequently - 32% of completers had attended two schools during their high school years, and 15% had attended three or more. By contrast, 18% of leavers had attended two schools, and 6% had attended three or more.

Those who had attended more than one elementary or high school were asked the reason for the last change. "Regular progression through the school system" was the top reason for completers (63%) and leavers (70%). "Family moved" was the second most-cited reason (25% of completers and 16% of leavers).

## 2. Family-related experiences

The many personal factors that are associated with school outcomes are shaped by the different contexts in which students spend their time. The family is a key context that can influence students and their academic achievement. The 2012 APS collected information on family support during respondents' last year of school.

### Family involvement in school

Respondents were asked if their parents, guardians or other family members did the following during their last year of school: speak to or visit their teachers; attend a school event in which they participated; and participate in any other school activity. Inuit completers and leavers did not differ significantly in reporting family involvement at school. For example, a majority of completers and leavers reported that their parents spoke to or visited their teacher during their last year of school (69% and 63%).

### Help with homework

Respondents were asked how often their parents, guardians or other family members checked or helped with homework in their last year of school. The percentages of Inuit completers and leavers who received help with their homework did not differ significantly. For instance, 33% of completers and 29% of leavers reported that their parents checked their homework at least once a week.

### Support from family

The 2012 APS asked if at any time during respondents' last year in school they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else. Among Inuit who needed such support, 69% reported having received it from their parents, guardians, or other family members. The percentages of Inuit completers and leavers who received support from their family did not differ significantly (71% and 68%).

18. In this study, "Aboriginal" refers to students who self-identified as being Aboriginal in British Columbia's Ministry of Education data, and thus, may include First Nations (Status and non-Status), Métis, and Inuit students.

## Majority lived with family

The 2012 APS asked respondents if they lived with a parent, guardian or other family members during their last year of school. The majority of Inuit completers and leavers lived full-time with their family during their last year of school (81% and 79%).

## Siblings who dropped out

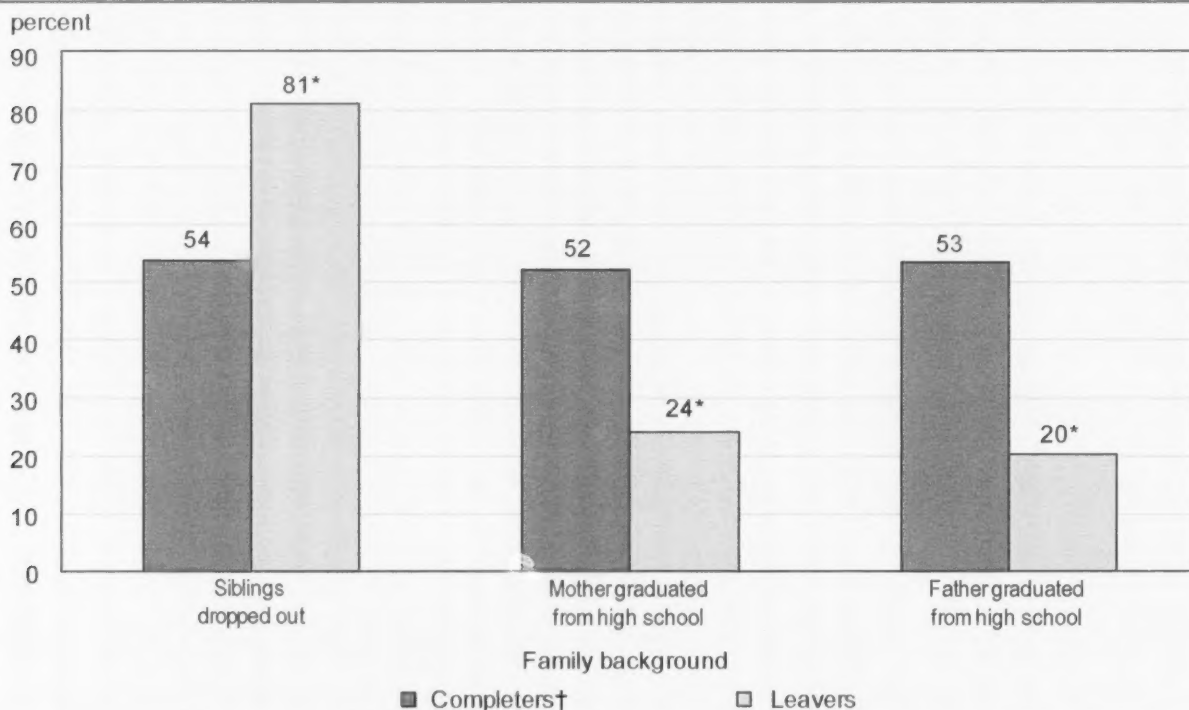
Students with a sibling who leaves school before completion are more likely to drop out themselves (Rumberger, 2011). The 2012 APS asked respondents if any of their brothers or sisters had dropped out of high school. Eight out of ten (81%) Inuit leavers had siblings who had dropped out. This percentage was higher than the figure for completers (54%) (Chart B2.5).

## Parents who graduated from high school

Parents' education is a "human resource" that can influence children's cognitive development, motivation, and educational aspirations (Rumberger, 2011). Respondents were asked about the highest level of education that their mother and father had completed. Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to have parents with at least a high school diploma (Chart B2.5).

**Chart B2.5**

**Having siblings who dropped out and parental education, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### 3. School-related experiences

Along with the family, the school itself can influence students and their academic success. A school's policies and practices can create a climate that may promote or hinder student engagement and achievement.

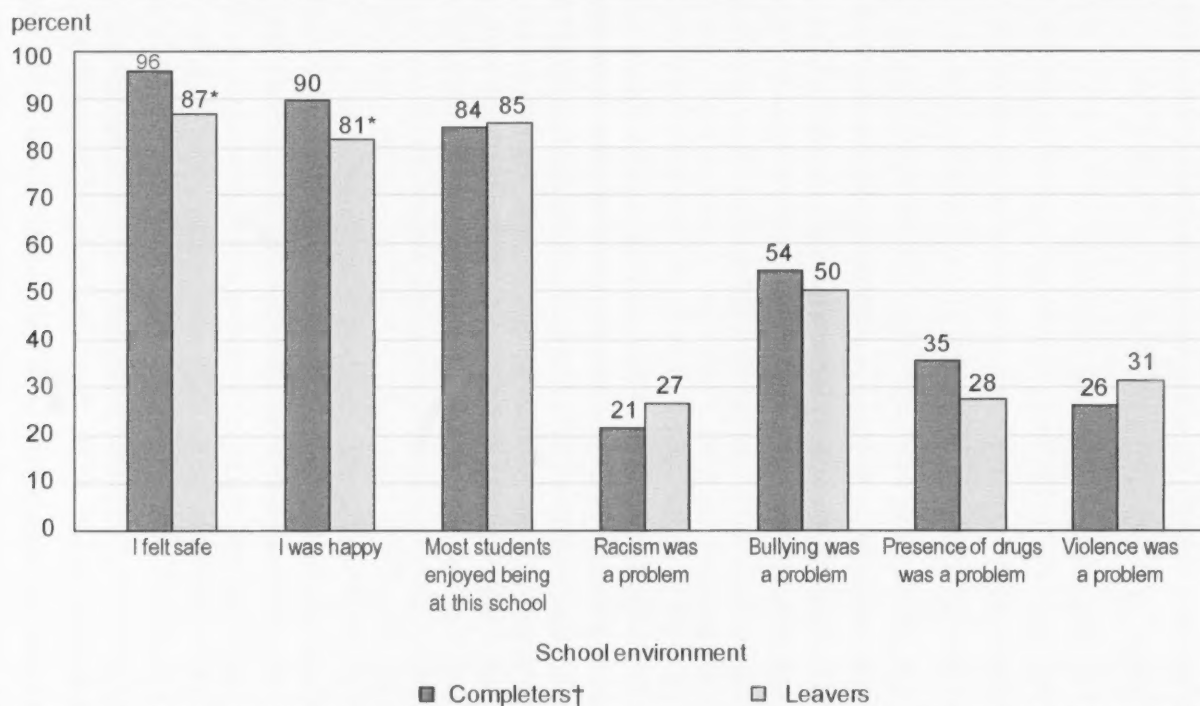
#### School environment

The 2012 APS asked respondents if, during their last year of school, they felt safe and happy at school; if most students at the school enjoyed being there; and if the school offered parents many opportunities to be involved in school activities. Together, these questions constitute a "positive school environment" indicator. Inuit completers were more likely than leavers to have felt safe (96% versus 87%) and happy (90% versus 81%) at their school. The percentages of Inuit completers and leavers who reported that most students enjoyed being there (84% and 85%) and that the school offered parents many opportunities to be involved (69% and 71%) did not differ significantly (Chart B2.6).

Respondents were asked if racism, bullying, alcohol, drugs or violence were problems at school during their last year. Together, these questions constitute a "negative school environment" indicator. Inuit completers and leavers did not differ in their perceptions about the negativity of their school environment. The percentages of completers and leavers who reported that racism (21% and 27%), bullying (54% and 50%), alcohol (20% and 17%), drugs (35% and 28%), and violence (26% and 31%) were problems at their school did not differ significantly (Chart B2.6).

**Chart B2.6**

**Characteristics of school environment in last year of school, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## School support

The 2012 APS asked respondents if their school supported First Nations, Métis, or Inuit culture (through teaching or activities) during their last year. Inuit leavers were more likely than completers to report that the school supported their culture: 82% versus 71%.

Respondents were also asked if at any time during their last year in school they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else. Among Inuit who needed such support, 77% received it from teachers, guidance counsellors, or others at school. Completers were more likely than leavers to report having received support from school staff: 87% versus 68%.

## Section 3: Postsecondary education experiences

In recent years, growing percentages of Inuit have earned postsecondary credentials (CESC, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2008). Data from 2011 from the National Household Survey (NHS) show no gap between the Inuit and the non-Aboriginal population in attainment rates at the trades level. However, gaps remain at the college and university levels (Statistics Canada, 2013a). Barriers to completion of postsecondary education for Inuit may include lack of academic preparation, the need to relocate (often from remote to urban areas), lack of financial resources, family responsibilities, and loss of support systems (Malatest et al, 2004; Holmes, 2005).

This section describes the experiences of Inuit in obtaining postsecondary credentials.<sup>19</sup> Because some high school leavers pursued postsecondary studies, comparisons between leavers and completers are made when appropriate.

The first subsection is a postsecondary education profile of Inuit aged 18 to 44.<sup>20</sup> The second focuses on those with postsecondary credentials (trades certificate, college diploma, university certificate below the bachelor's level, university degree). The third subsection concerns those who started but never finished postsecondary education.

### 1. Postsecondary education profile

#### A quarter with postsecondary credentials

At the time of the 2012 APS, 26% of Inuit aged 18 to 44 had postsecondary credentials; according to the 2011 NHS, the comparable figure for the non-Aboriginal population in the same age range was 64%. An additional 5%<sup>E</sup> of Inuit were attending a postsecondary institution for the first time; 9% had started postsecondary studies but did not finish; and 61% had never attended a postsecondary institution.

The postsecondary education profiles of Inuit men and women were similar, but differences by age group were apparent. As expected given their age, those aged 18 to 24 were less likely than 25- to 44-year-olds to have completed postsecondary education (9% versus 34%), but more likely to be attending a postsecondary institution for the first time (9%<sup>E</sup> versus 2%<sup>E</sup>).

#### About one in eight leavers have postsecondary credentials

More than four in ten (45%) Inuit high school completers had postsecondary credentials. This percentage was much smaller for leavers but nonetheless, 12% of high school leavers were postsecondary graduates. Completers were also more likely than leavers to be currently attending a postsecondary institution for the first time (8%<sup>E</sup> versus 2%<sup>E</sup>). The percentages of Inuit completers and leavers who had started but never finished postsecondary studies did not differ significantly (Chart B3.1).

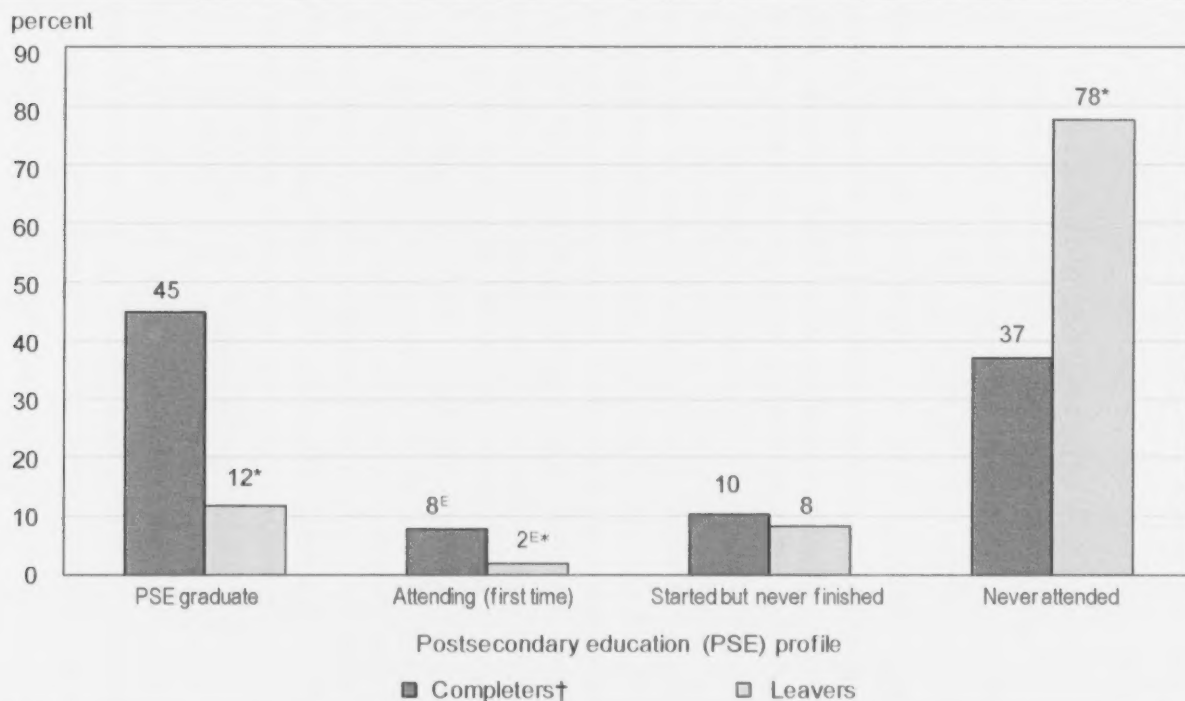
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19 The 2012 APS allows for analysis of those who started but never finished postsecondary education. Similar data are not available from the National Household Survey, as it asked only about the highest certificate, diploma or degree completed. Consequently, results from the two surveys are not directly comparable.

20 While most individuals aged 18 to 24 would not be expected to have a university degree, the analyses include this age group because they could have obtained a trades certificate or a college diploma.

Chart B3.1

Postsecondary education profile, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012



<sup>E</sup> use with caution

† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## 2. Postsecondary graduates

Among Inuit aged 18 to 44 who were postsecondary graduates, close to half (48%) graduated with a college diploma (17% graduated from a program of less than one year; 24%, from a one- or two-year program; and 7%<sup>E</sup>, from a program of more than two years). A third (32%) had a trades certificate, and 15%<sup>E</sup>, a university degree. Men were more likely than women to have a trades certificate (50% versus 18%<sup>E</sup>).

According to the 2011 NHS, the comparable figures for non-Aboriginal postsecondary graduates aged 18 to 44 were 34% for college diplomas, 16% for trades certificates, and 43% for university degrees.

### Majority of leavers had trades certificate

Inuit high school completers and leavers with postsecondary credentials tended to have graduated from different types of programs. Among completers, the most common credentials were a college diploma from a one- or two-year program (27%), a trades certificate (22%), a university degree (19%<sup>E</sup>), a college diploma from a program of less than one year (18%), and a college diploma from a program of more than two years (8%<sup>E</sup>). The majority of high school leavers with postsecondary credentials had a trades certificate (62%); 17%<sup>E</sup> had a college diploma from a program of less than one year, and 15%<sup>E</sup> had a college diploma from



a one- or two-year program.

### Half moved for postsecondary studies

Because there are no colleges or universities located within Inuit Nunangat, Inuit usually have to relocate to undertake postsecondary studies (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2007). Data from the 2012 APS show that 50% of Inuit with postsecondary credentials had moved to pursue their education. The percentages who moved varied with the type of credential obtained - 85% who had a university degree moved, compared with 38% of those with a trades certificate and 45% with a college diploma.

High school completers were more likely than leavers to have moved for postsecondary studies (58% versus 27%).

### Distance education

Distance education can reduce obstacles to postsecondary education, such as cost or the need to relocate, especially for people in remote areas (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). The 2012 APS asked respondents if they were able to access any of their postsecondary courses through the Internet or another form of distance education, and if they used this method of instruction. About 20% of Inuit aged 18 to 44 with postsecondary credentials used some form of distance education; 14%<sup>E</sup> had access to but did not use distance education. Two-thirds (66%) of those with postsecondary credentials reported that they did not have access to distance education, or that it was not applicable to their program or personal situation.

The percentages of Inuit high school completers and leavers who used distance education for their postsecondary studies did not differ significantly (23%<sup>E</sup> and 11%<sup>E</sup>).

### Funding

The expenses associated with postsecondary education include not only tuition, but also, costs of relocation, transportation, housing, food, daycare, and other family responsibilities (Malatest et al, 2004). APS respondents were asked if the money available for their education was sufficient to meet all their needs or expenses. About one-quarter (27%) of Inuit who had postsecondary credentials reported that the money they had was not sufficient.

The percentages of Inuit high school completers and leavers who reported that the money they had to fund their postsecondary education was insufficient did not differ significantly (25% and 32%).

APS respondents were asked to indicate all<sup>21</sup> their sources of funding for postsecondary education. A quarter (24%) of Inuit with postsecondary credentials had applied for and received a government student loan. Other sources included: funding from an Inuit Land Claim organization (51%), own savings or working while going to school (41%); grants, bursaries and scholarships (40%); money from family that did not need to be repaid (29%); Employment Insurance or other government funding (26%); bank loan or line of credit (12%<sup>E</sup>); and loan from family (5%<sup>E</sup>).

Inuit high school completers were more likely than leavers to fund their postsecondary studies with a government student loan (29% versus 13%<sup>E</sup>), with their own savings or working while going to school (47% versus 26%<sup>E</sup>), or through grants, bursaries or scholarships (46% versus 22%).

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21 Percentages for sources of funding do not add to 100%, because respondents could indicate more than one source

### 3. Started but did not finish

#### Reasons for non-completion

APS respondents who started but never finished a postsecondary program were asked why they did not complete their studies. Reasons cited by Inuit aged 18 to 44 included that they were pregnant or caring for their children (16%<sup>E</sup>); they had other family responsibilities (18%<sup>E</sup>); they lost interest or lacked motivation (12%<sup>E</sup>); their courses were too hard (10%<sup>E</sup>); they got a job or wanted to work (8%<sup>E</sup>); or that it was too difficult to be away from home (6%<sup>E</sup>).

#### One-third lacked funds

Just over one-third (35%) of Inuit aged 18 to 44 who started but never finished postsecondary studies said that the money available for their education was not sufficient to meet their needs or expenses. The percentages of high school completers and leavers who had insufficient money to fund postsecondary studies did not differ significantly (30% and 39%).

### Section 4: Current employment experiences

Employment rates and employment income of Inuit have historically been lower than those of the non-Aboriginal population (Bernier, 1997; Wilson and MacDonald, 2010; Pendakur and Pendakur, 2011). Numerous factors have been related to the less favourable labour market outcomes of Inuit. These include lower educational attainment, insufficient training, lower proficiency in one of the two official languages, lone parenthood, greater geographic mobility, discrimination, and weak infrastructure in communities to support employment (Ciceri and Scott, 2006; Conference Board of Canada, 2002).

In recent years, the impact of the 2008 recession was greater and persisted longer for Aboriginal workers than for the non-Aboriginal population (Usalcas, 2011). Data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) show a lower employment rate for Aboriginal people.

In 2011, 54% of Inuit were younger than 25, compared with 30% of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2013b). It is important to understand the employment situation that these young Inuit could encounter as they enter the labour market over the next couple of decades.

This section examines the employment experiences of Inuit high school completers and leavers. Particular attention is paid to the role of education on various measures of employment. The first two subsections focus on people who were employed at the time of the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) - their employment profile and their earnings. The third subsection examines those who were not working and barriers to employment. The final subsection looks briefly at people engaged in traditional activities such as hunting, trapping, and arts and crafts. Conventional measures of "labour force participation" may not reflect the complex work reality in northern communities where many Inuit live. The Canadian north is unique because it combines traditional Inuit and wage economies (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2007). Many Inuit contribute to their communities through traditional activities, which should be considered when examining the employment experiences of Inuit.

## 1. Overall labour force profile

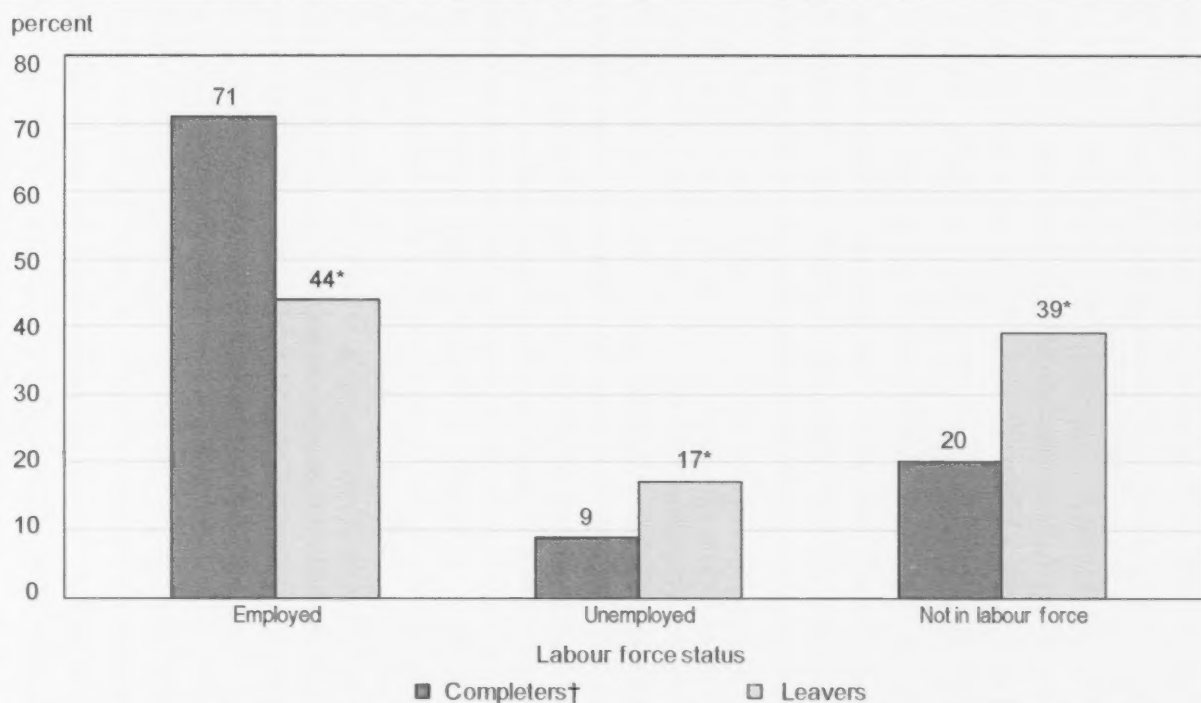
### Completers more likely to be employed

At the time of their 2012 APS interview, 71% of Inuit high school completers had a job; 9% were unemployed and looking for work; and 20% were not in the labour force (neither working nor looking for work) (Chart B4.1).

The labour force profile of leavers was different - 44% were employed; 17% were unemployed; and 39% were not in the labour force (Chart B4.1).

**Chart B4.1**

**Labour force status, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## 2. Inuit workers

According to APS data, the higher the level of education of completers and leavers, the more likely they were to be employed. Even though they had not completed the requirements for a high school diploma, 28% of employed Inuit leavers had some education beyond high school - 6% had a college diploma; 10% had a trades certificate; and 11% had at least some postsecondary education.

### Men and women equally likely to be employed

Men usually have higher rates of employment than women, who have historically had family responsibilities that can prevent them from participating in the labour force to the same extent as men (Ferraio, 2010). However, for Inuit, the differences were not significant. Among both Inuit completers and leavers, women were just as likely as men to have a job.

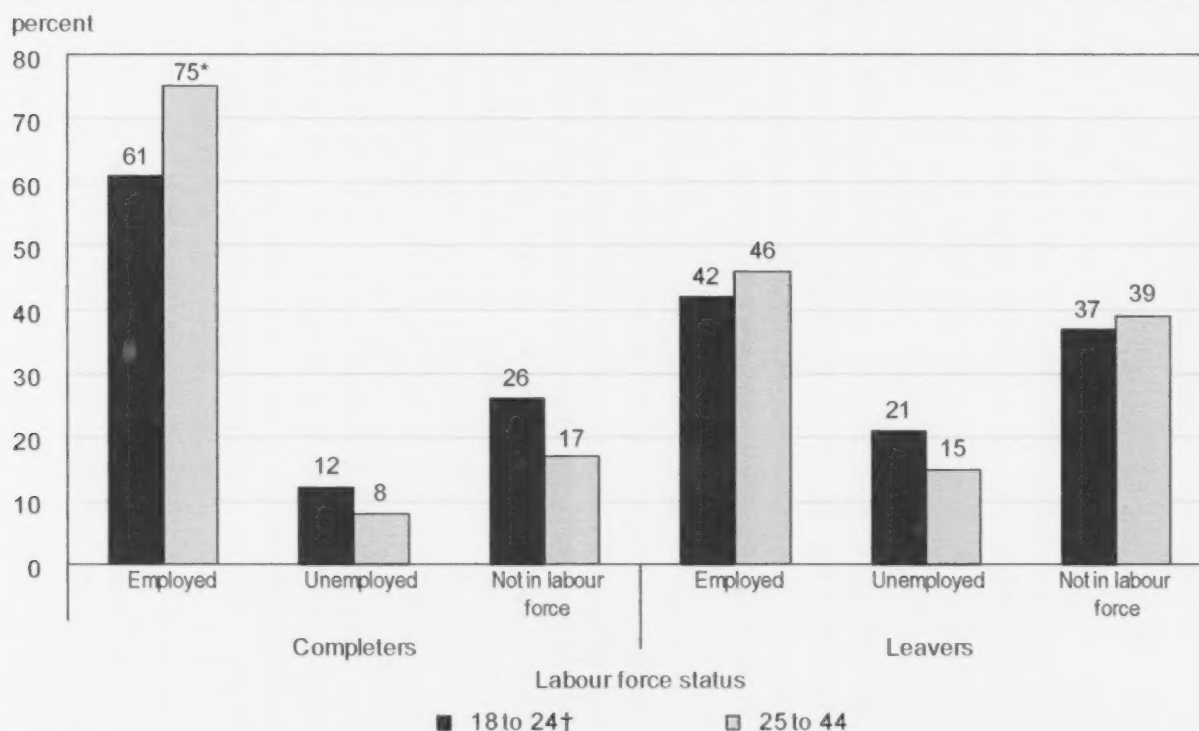
### Young completers less likely to be employed

Generally, youth have lower employment rates than adults, mainly because many young people are often still attending school, and therefore, may be unable or unwilling to hold a job (Shaiens and Gluszynski, 2009; Bernard, 2013).

Inuit completers aged 18 to 24 were significantly less likely than those aged 25 to 44 to be employed: 61% versus 75%. The difference in the percentages of younger and older leavers who were employed was not statistically significant (Chart B4.2).

**Chart B4.2**

**Labour force status by age group, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012.

### Majority worked full-time

At the time of their 2012 APS interview, the majority of employed Inuit completers (84%) and leavers (81%) were working full time. However, among leavers, employed men were more likely than employed women to work at least 30 hours a week (88% versus 73%).

As expected, young Inuit workers were significantly less likely than older workers to be employed full time: 69% versus 88%. This pattern prevailed among completers and leavers.

### Reasons for part-time work

The 2012 APS asked part-time workers the main reason why they were working less than 30 hours a week. Half (49%) of Inuit completers and leavers worked part time because they could not find full-time work.<sup>22</sup>

### Median employment income range

The median employment income range of Inuit completers was \$30,000 to \$40,000.<sup>23,24</sup> For completers, higher education translated into higher median income. Completers with no education beyond high school graduation reported a median employment income range of \$20,000 to \$30,000; those with a trades certificate or a college diploma reported \$40,000 to \$50,000. The exception was those with some postsecondary whose median employment income was in the \$10,000-to-\$20,000 range.

The median employment income range of leavers was \$10,000 to \$20,000. Again, higher education was associated with higher median income. Leavers with some postsecondary education reported median employment income in the \$20,000-to-\$30,000 range, and those with a trades certificate or college diploma, in the \$30,000-to-\$40,000 range.

Employment income differed for male and female Inuit workers. Among completers, women reported a median employment income range of \$30,000 to \$40,000, and men, \$40,000 to \$50,000. Among leavers, women's median employment income was in the \$10,000-to-\$20,000 range, and that of men, in the \$20,000-to-\$30,000 range.

### 3. Unemployed and not in the labour force

More than half (56%) of Inuit leavers and 29% of completers were not working at the time of their 2012 APS interview.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, 17% of leavers were unemployed, and 39% were not in the labour force. The corresponding figures for completers were 9% and 20% (Chart B4.1).

### Reasons for not finding work among unemployed

The most common difficulties cited by Inuit searching for work were a shortage of jobs (80%), not having the necessary training and education (60%), lacking the necessary work experience (55%), and not knowing where to look (41%).<sup>26</sup>

Completers and leavers were equally likely to cite job shortages and not knowing where to look as reasons for not finding work. As expected, leavers were more likely than completers to say they did not have the appropriate education or training (69% versus 37%) and that they lacked work experience (62% versus 40%) (Chart B4.3).

22 The small sample size precludes further analysis by gender or age.

23 Because personal employment income was reported in ranges, a median income range is calculated. The "median range" is the category for which the cumulative percentage of reporting respondents came closest to 50%.

24 Data pertain only to those who were employed in the week before their APS interview and who reported their personal employment income.

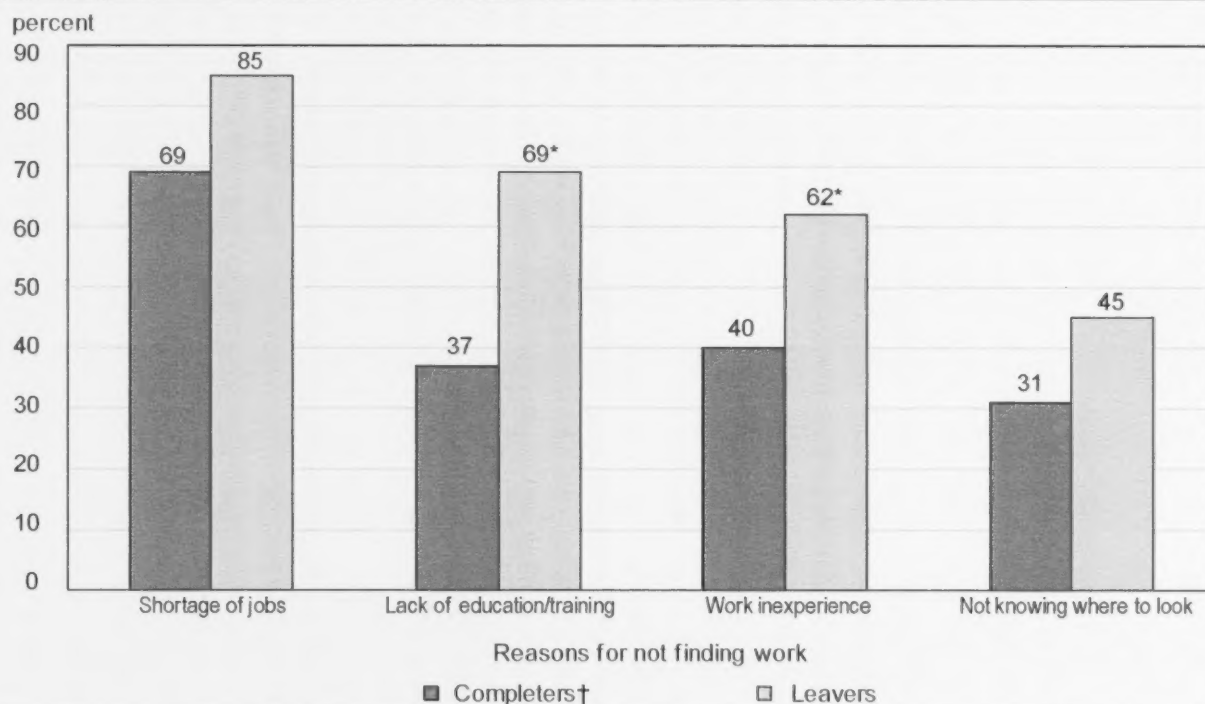
25 It is important to distinguish between the two categories of "not working." Respondents who had actively looked for a job in the previous four weeks are defined as "unemployed"; those who did not work and did not look for work are classified as "not in the labour force."

26 Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents could identify more than one reason.



**Chart B4.3**

**Selected reasons for not finding work among unemployed, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

#### Non-participation in labour force

Many people who are not in the labour force are retirees, homemakers, students or permanently unable to work. Others are waiting for replies from potential employers, waiting to be recalled to a former job, or discouraged as they believe no work is available. On the other hand, some who are not in the labour force do indeed want a job. This was the case for more than one-third (37%) of Inuit who were not in the labour force.

The 2012 APS asked those who were not in the labour force but wanted a job why they did not look for work. The main reasons were that they believed no work was available in the area or suited to their skills (23%) and caring for their own children (17%<sup>§</sup>). One-quarter (26%<sup>§</sup>) of women said they did not look for work because they were caring for children, and 31%<sup>§</sup> of men said no work was available.

#### 4. Traditional activities

Many Inuit are involved in the arts and traditions of their culture. Traditional activities include making clothing or footwear; arts and crafts; hunting, fishing, and trapping; and gathering wild plants. For Inuit, these activities may be a supplement to, or a substitute for, participating in the monetarized labour market (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2007).

According to the 2012 APS, 84% of Inuit adults had taken part in at least one traditional activity in the past year. The percentages did not differ for high school completers and leavers or for men and women. Participation in traditional activities was not associated with educational attainment.

One-fifth of Inuit adults participated in these activities for money. Among leavers, men were more likely than women to engage in traditional activities for money or as supplementary income (28% versus 18%), but there were no significant differences among completers.

## Section 5: Further education or training

The previous sections examined respondents' past education experiences and their employment status at the time of the survey. The 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) also asked Inuit aged 18 to 44 questions about their future education plans and obstacles to additional schooling.

Barriers such as cost, time constraints and family responsibilities can prevent people from taking the education or training they would like. Aboriginal students are particularly likely to face challenges in furthering their education (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). Some, for example, may lack financial resources, or be unaware of help available through student aid programs. Other barriers may include skepticism about the employment benefits of additional education (which can lead to motivational issues), and experienced or perceived racism (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

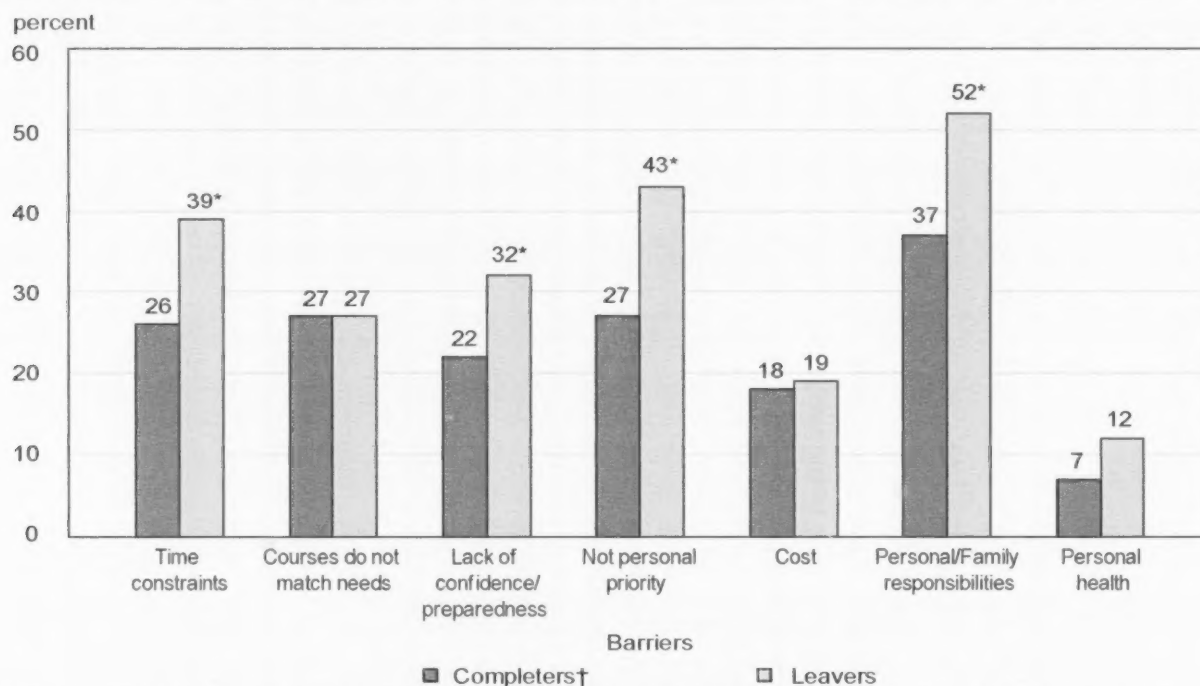
### Barriers to further education or training

According to the APS, the factors that prevent Inuit aged 18 to 44 from taking further education or training differed for high school leavers and completers. As well, differences emerged by gender for certain barriers.

Many Inuit reported that personal or family responsibilities keep them from further education (Chart B5.1). Two-thirds (66%) of female leavers identified this obstacle; a rate that was higher than that for female completers (44%), male leavers (37%) and male completers (27%). Related to this, female leavers (43%) were more likely than female completers (29%) to mention time constraints (too busy, no time to study) as an obstacle to further education; the percentages reporting this barrier among male leavers and completers did not differ significantly (35% and 22%<sup>F</sup>).

While leavers were more likely than completers to report that additional schooling was not a personal priority (43% versus 27%) and that they lacked confidence or felt unprepared (32% versus 22%), completers and leavers were equally likely (27% for both) to report that they were not pursuing education or training because the courses available did not match their needs or interests. The percentages of completers and leavers (just under 20%) who reported cost as an impediment to further education also did not differ significantly, nor did the percentages for personal health (7% of completers and 12% of leavers cited this barrier).

**Chart B5.1**  
**Barriers to further education or training, Inuit completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Half plan further education

The 2012 APS asked if respondents had plans to "take any other education that could be counted towards a certificate, diploma or degree from an educational institution."<sup>27</sup> Just over half (55%) of Inuit aged 18 to 44 reported such plans; an additional 5% indicated that they were uncertain. The percentages of high school leavers and completers reporting plans for further schooling did not differ significantly (51% and 59%).

Women were more likely than men to plan further education (62% versus 46%), and as expected, 18- to 24-year-olds were more likely than those aged 25 to 44 to report such plans (61% versus 52%).

### Unemployed most likely to plan further education

Inuit who were unemployed were the most likely to report plans to further their schooling - 71%, compared with 52% of those who were employed, and 54% of those not in the labour force. Among women and 25- to 44-year-olds, the percentages planning further education did not differ significantly between the unemployed and those not in the labour force.

27. For respondents attending a postsecondary institution at the time of their APS interview, this referred to education beyond their current studies.

## Part C: The education and employment experiences of Métis

Métis in Canada are a people with their own unique culture, traditions, way of life, collective consciousness and nationhood (Métis National Council, 2013). According to data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 451,795 people identified as Métis. They represented 32.3% of the Aboriginal population and 1.4% of the Canadian population. Métis made up 8.0% of the population of the Northwest Territories, 6.7% of Manitoba's population, and 5.2% of Saskatchewan's population.<sup>28</sup>

The analyses that follow examine the education and employment experiences of Métis who, at the time of the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), were aged 18 to 44 and were not attending elementary or high school.

### Section 1: Education pathways

Attending high school is the most common means of acquiring a secondary diploma in Canada, but youth can follow different pathways through the education system. Some enter and stay until they graduate, while others drop out. Those who drop out may re-enrol and earn a high school diploma or drop out more than once. Some who leave school before graduation may obtain an equivalency diploma by enrolling in classes offered through adult high schools, community colleges, or distance education programs.

This section looks at the education pathways of Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44. Completers are profiled in terms of variables such as age of completion, path to completion (high school versus equivalency program), and reasons for returning for those with a break in attendance. For leavers, age when last attended school, occurrences of dropping out and reasons for doing so, and current attendance at an equivalency program are examined.

It is important to recognize that some leavers may return to school in the future and obtain their high school credentials. Moreover, high school graduation may not be the highest level of educational attainment of either completers or leavers, as some may also have a trades certificate, college diploma, or university degree. Postsecondary credentials are discussed in Section 3.

#### 1. Completers

According to the 2012 APS, 77% of Métis aged 18 to 44 had completed the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent. This group is hereafter referred to as "completers." Women were more likely than men to have high school credentials: 80% versus 74%, respectively. Data from the NHS show that 89% of the non-Aboriginal population aged 18 to 44 had at least a high school diploma or equivalent in 2011.

#### Average age at high school completion

With the exception of Quebec,<sup>29</sup> the typical student graduates from high school at age 18 (McMullen and Gilmore, 2010). According to the 2012 APS, the average age at which Métis completers obtained high school credentials was 18.1 years. Those who completed an equivalency program (and hence, followed an indirect path to high school completion) were older (22.0 years) when they obtained their credentials than those who graduated from a high school (17.8 years). This was true for both men and women.

#### Majority obtained diploma through high school

A large majority (92%) of Métis completers aged 18 to 44 obtained their high school diploma through attendance at a high school. There were no significant differences by gender.

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28. A detailed analysis of the Aboriginal population based on the 2011 NHS is available in *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>).

29. Given the structure of the educational system in Quebec, the typical student will graduate from high school one year younger than those in other provinces.

About four in ten (43%) who obtained their diploma through an equivalency program did so at an adult high school. Another 19%<sup>E</sup> attended a college or technical institute, and 15%<sup>E</sup>, a community center.

Fully 91% of Métis completers followed a direct path through school; another 6% left once, and 3% had multiple departures. Men and women were equally likely to complete high school without breaks in attendance.

Métis completers with a break in attendance were asked their main reason for returning to school. The majority (77%) returned to school because they "realized value of education/wanted a diploma."

## 2. Leavers

In 2012, 23% of Métis aged 18 to 44 had not completed the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent. This group is hereafter referred to as "leavers." According to the 2011 NHS, the corresponding figure for the non-Aboriginal population was 11%.

### Age when last attended school

Métis leavers were, on average, 16.8 years old when they last attended school. Women were younger (16.5 years) than men (17.1 years) when they last attended school.

While the majority (68%) of Métis leavers dropped out once, 32% did so two or more times. The likelihood of multiple departures did not differ significantly for men and women: 27% and 39%, respectively.

### Men and women drop out for different reasons

Research has shown that reasons for dropping out of school differ by gender. Data from the 2002 Youth in Transition Survey found that students of both genders cited school-related reasons most frequently, but females were much more likely to report personal or family reasons, and males more often reported work-related factors (Bushnik, Barr-Telford and Bussière, 2004).

Respondents to the 2012 APS who dropped out were asked why they left school before completion. If they offered more than one reason, they were asked the "main" reason. Those who dropped out more than once were asked about their most recent departure.

The reasons that male Métis leavers dropped out of school included the following: wanted to work (21%), school problems<sup>30</sup> (21%), lack of interest (17%), and had to work/money problems (15%). One-quarter of female Métis leavers cited pregnancy or the need to care for their own children as the main reason why they dropped out of school.

### Few attending equivalency program

At the time of the APS, 7%<sup>E</sup> of leavers were attending a high school equivalency program. The percentages for male and female leavers did not differ significantly: 5%<sup>E</sup> and 8%, respectively. Four in ten (39%<sup>E</sup>) were at an adult high school; 17%<sup>E</sup> were using distance education; and 13%<sup>E</sup> were attending a college or technical institute.

<sup>30</sup> The category "school problems" includes having problems with school work, with teachers, or being expelled.



## Section 2: Experiences during last year of school

Why some students leave high school before they graduate, and others go on to earn a diploma is not easy to explain. The previous section examined specific reasons for leaving school, which can be viewed as the “proximal” reasons that immediately preceded departure. However, dropping out is not an isolated event that can be attributed to a single cause, but rather, a complex process that is influenced by factors associated with students, their families, the schools they attend, and their communities, the effects of which can begin to emerge in the early years of school attendance (see Rumberger 2011 for a review of the general population literature).

Data from the National Household Survey (NHS) show that in 2011, a larger share of Métis had not completed high school, compared with the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2013a). The 2012 APS collected data on factors that might be associated with completing or withdrawing from high school. These factors, while not exhaustive, cover a range of experiences and circumstances that are important from an Aboriginal perspective - at home, in school, and in the community (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

This section describes how Métis aged 18 to 44 perceived their experiences during their last year of school. It is organized into three subsections. The first describes personal factors that may be associated with completing or leaving high school. The second subsection describes family experiences and support. The third examines the school environment. The guiding research question was, “Do the personal, family, and school-related experiences of high school completers and leavers differ?”

The topics analyzed in this section are based on respondents' recollections, and therefore, may be subject to recall error. Moreover, differences between completers and leavers do not reflect simple “cause-and-effect” relationships with high school graduation; rather, the findings should be interpreted as being “associated with” being a completer or leaver.

### 1. Personal experiences

This subsection explores some aspects of personal lives that are known to be associated with graduating from, or dropping out of, high school. The 2012 APS included the following measures of respondents' personal experiences during their last year in school: educational performance (grades and repeating a grade), student engagement (absenteeism, participation in extracurricular activities, and employment during high school), peers, and changing schools.

#### Completers more likely to have good grades

Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked about their overall grade average in their last year of school. Métis completers were more likely than leavers to report mainly As (40% versus 17%) or Bs (40% versus 31%) (Chart C2.1). Conversely, leavers were more likely than completers to report mainly Cs (34% versus 16%) or Ds, Es, and Fs (18% versus 3%<sup>e</sup>). Female completers were especially likely to report mainly As - 46%, compared with 33% of male completers, 19% of female leavers, and 16% of male leavers.

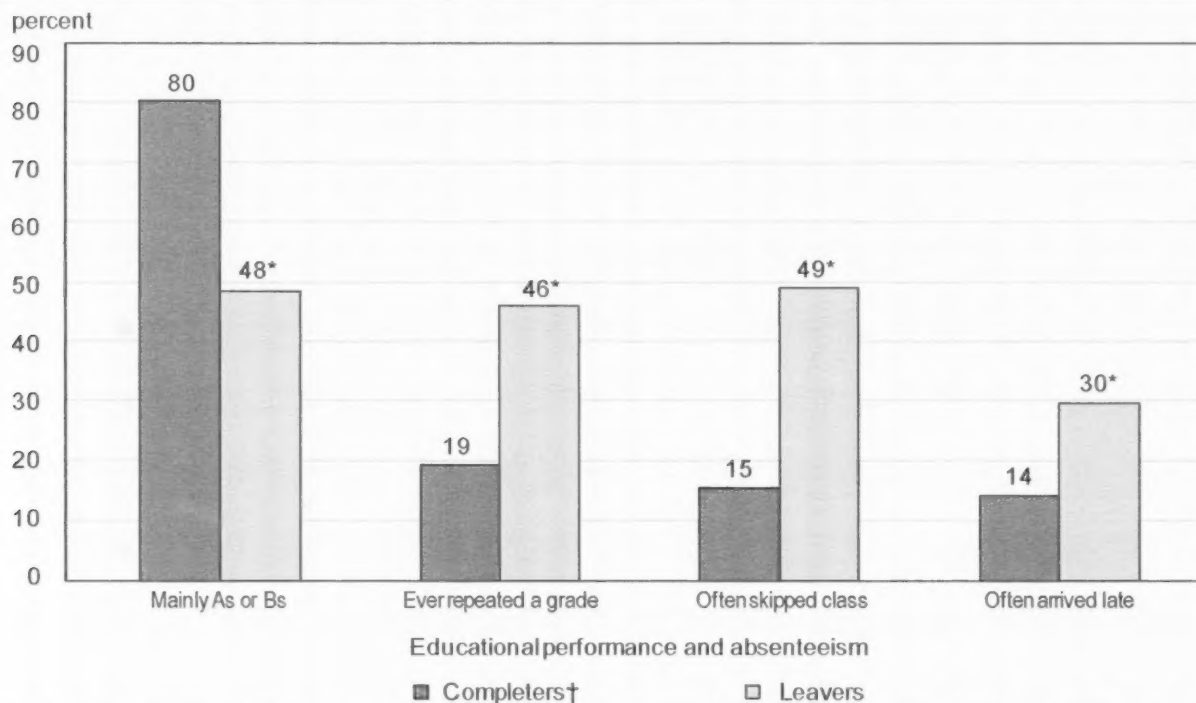
Métis leavers were more likely than completers to have repeated a grade during their elementary or high school years (46% versus 19%) (Chart C2.1). Male leavers were the most likely to have repeated a grade - 53%, compared with 38% of female leavers, 24% of male completers, and 16% of female completers.

#### Skipping classes/Arriving late

Absenteeism behaviours such as skipping classes and arriving late are indicators of school disengagement, which is related to dropping out (Rumberger, 2011). Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked how often they skipped classes (without parents' permission) and arrived late for school during their last year of school. Métis completers were less likely than leavers to report that they “often” skipped classes (15% versus 49%) or “often” arrived late (14% versus 30%) (Chart C2.1).

**Chart C2.1**

**Educational performance and absenteeism in last year of school, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## Extracurricular activities

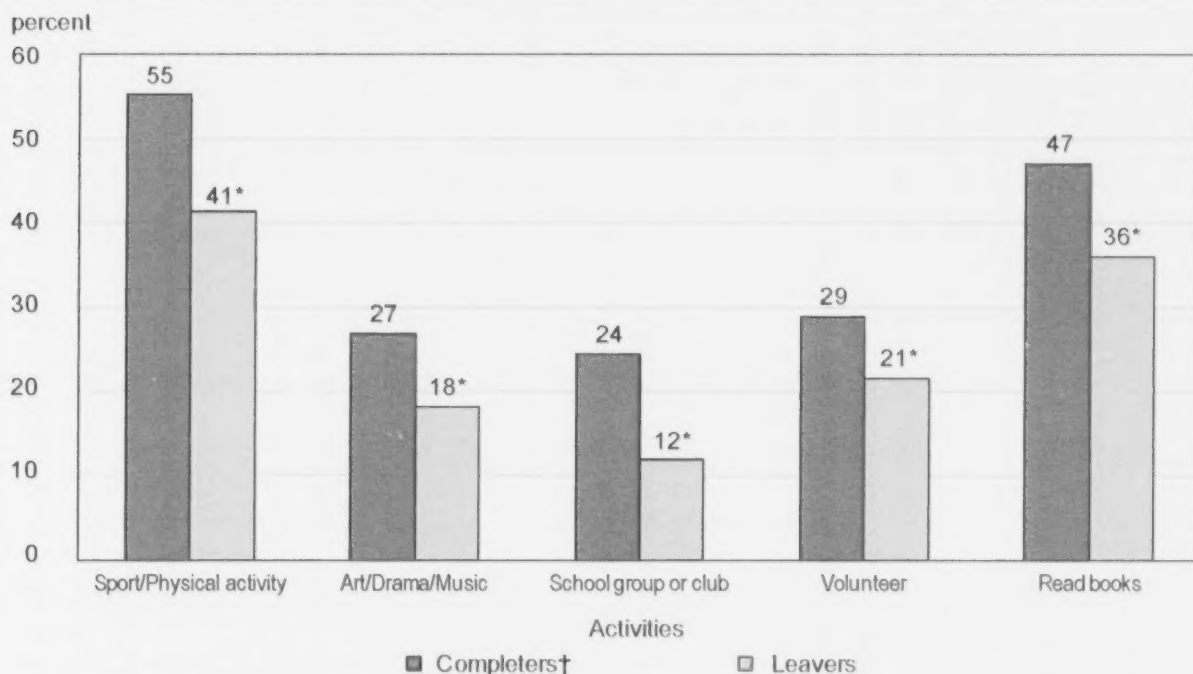
Participation in extracurricular activities is an indicator of student engagement outside of school hours. Students who participate in extracurricular activities, especially males involved in sports, are less likely to drop out of school (Rumberger, 2011). Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked if they participated in any of the following out-of-school activities during their last year of school: a sport or a physical activity or playing organized sports (including taking lessons); an art, drama or music group or club (including taking lessons); a school group or club (such as student council, yearbook or science club) or groups or clubs outside of school; activities related to First Nations, Métis or Inuit culture; spending time with Elders; and volunteering or helping without pay in the community.

Métis completers were more likely than leavers to have participated in a sport or physical activity (55% versus 41%), in an art, drama or music group (27% versus 18%), and in a school group or club (24% versus 12%) at least once a week during their last school year. In addition, completers were more likely than leavers to have volunteered at least once a week (29% versus 21%) (Chart C2.2). Completers and leavers did not differ significantly in the frequency with which they participated in cultural activities (5% and 7%); however, a higher percentage of leavers spent time with Elders at least once a week (28% versus 22%).

Male completers were the most likely to have participated in a sport or physical activity at least once a week during their last school year - 64%, compared with 49% of male leavers, 48% of female completers, and 32% of female leavers. Female completers were the most likely to have participated in a school group or club at least once a week during their last school year - 27%, compared with 21% of male completers, 9%<sup>E</sup> of female leavers, and 14%<sup>E</sup> of male leavers.

**Chart C2.2**

**Participating at least once a week in extracurricular activities and reading books four or more times a week in last year of school, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Completers read books more often

Data from the Program for International Student Assessment and the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) have shown that students who dropped out of high school by age 19 had lower reading abilities at age 15 (Knighton and Bussière, 2006). The 2012 APS asked respondents how often they read or looked at books, magazines, comics, etc. outside of school hours in their last year of school. Métis leavers were less likely than completers to have read books four or more times a week (36% versus 47%) (Chart C2.2). Male leavers were the least likely to read books four or more times a week - 29%, compared with 41% of male completers, 45% of female leavers, and 52% of female completers.

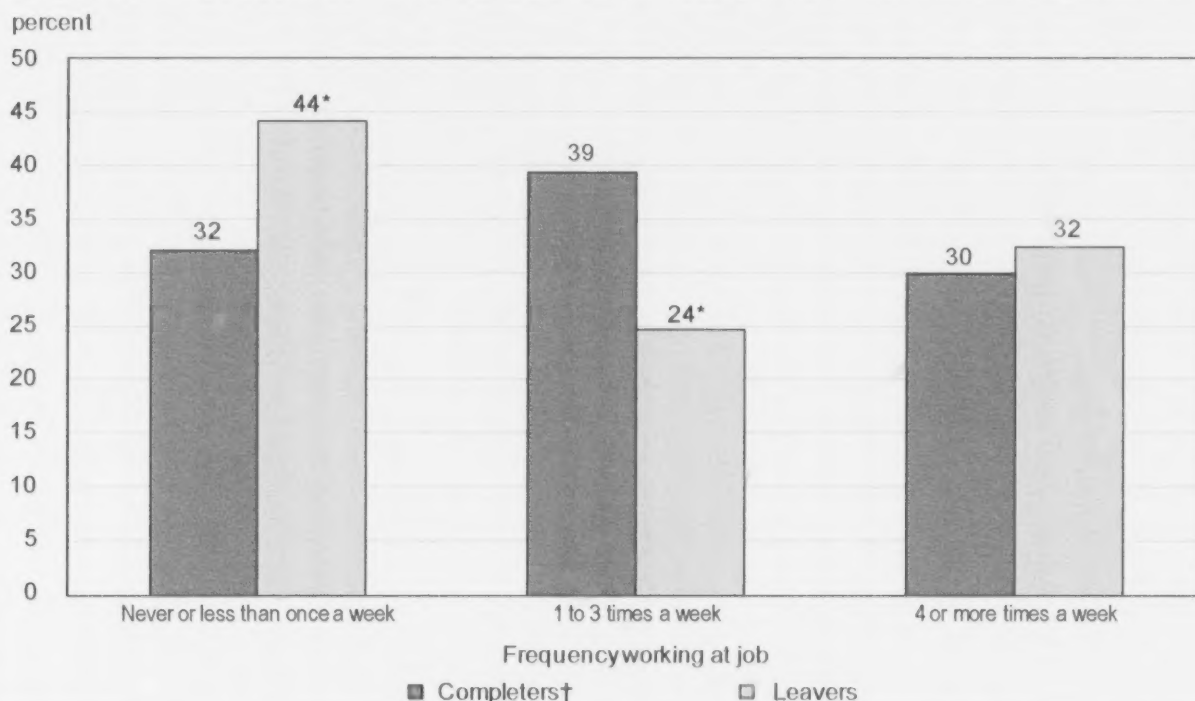
### Completers more likely to work 1 to 3 times a week

Working while attending high school is not necessarily detrimental to academic outcomes. Analyses of data from the YITS have shown that compared with students who worked less than 20 hours a week, those who did not work at all or worked 30 or more hours a week were more likely to drop out of high school (Bushnik, 2003). The 2012 APS asked respondents if they worked at a job (such as babysitting, working at a store, or tutoring) during their last year of school, and if so, how many times a week.

Métis completers were more likely than leavers to report having worked at a job 1 to 3 times a week during their last year of school (39% versus 24%). Leavers were more likely than completers to report not working or having worked less than once a week (44% versus 32%). The percentages of completers and leavers who worked 4 or more times a week did not differ significantly (30% and 32%) (Chart C2.3).

**Chart C2.3**

**Working at job in last year of school, by frequency, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

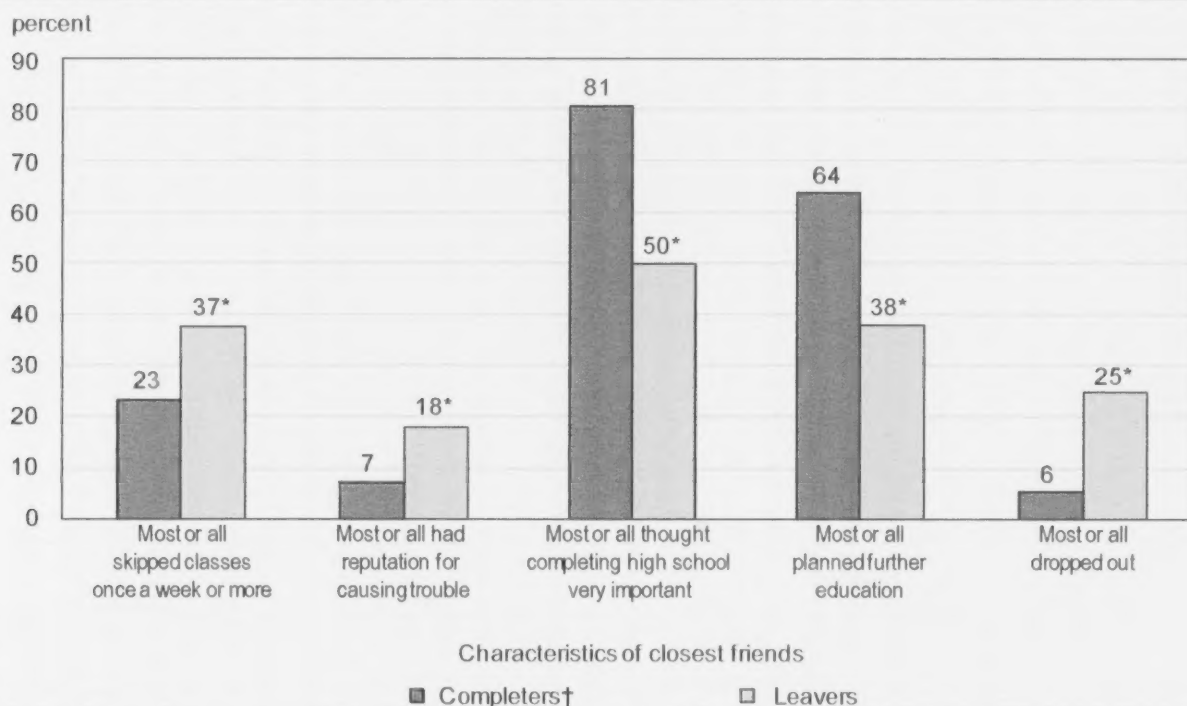
Female completers were the most likely to have worked 1 to 3 times a week during their last year of school - 43%, compared with 33% of male completers, 25% of female leavers, and 24% of male leavers.

### Friends with risk behaviours

Having friends who engage in risk behaviours or who have dropped out have been shown to increase the odds that an individual will also leave school (Rumberger, 2011). APS respondents were asked how many of their closest friends during their last year of school skipped classes once a week or more; had a reputation for causing trouble; and smoked cigarettes, used drugs, and drank alcohol. Together, these questions can provide a profile of the number of friends with "risk behaviours."

Métis leavers were more likely than completers to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends had risk behaviours. For example, leavers were more likely than completers to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends skipped classes once a week or more (37% versus 23%) or had a reputation for causing trouble (18% versus 7%) (Chart C2.4). Leavers were also more likely than completers to have many close friends who smoked cigarettes (54% versus 31%) or used drugs (26% versus 15%). The percentages of leavers and completers with many close friends who drank alcohol did not differ significantly (49% and 53%).

**Chart C2.4**  
**Characteristics of closest friends in last year of school, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Friends with high education aspirations

APS respondents were asked how many of their closest friends during their last year of school thought completing high school was very important; were planning education beyond high school; thought it was okay to work hard at school; and had dropped out. Together, these questions can provide a profile of the number of friends with "high education aspirations."

Métis completers were consistently more likely than leavers to report that "most" or "all" of their closest friends had high education aspirations. For example, 81% of completers, compared with 50% of leavers, had many close friends who thought completing high school was very important. Similarly, 64% of completers versus 38% of leavers had many close friends who planned education beyond high school. Completers were also more likely than leavers to have many friends who thought it was okay to work hard at school (63% versus 40%). Conversely, 25% of leavers reported that "most" or "all" of their closest friends had dropped out, compared with 6% of completers (Chart C2.4).



## Support from friends

Respondents were asked if at any time during their last year in school they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else. Among Métis who needed such support, 60% received it from their friends. The percentages of Métis completers and leavers who received support from their friends did not differ significantly (63% and 51%).

## Leavers more likely to change school frequently during early school years

Frequent changes of schools increase the odds of dropping out. In a British Columbia study, Aman and Ungerleider (2008) reported that graduation rates were highest among Aboriginal<sup>31</sup> students who never changed high schools. They also showed that school changes due to regular grade progression (for example, moving from a middle school to a senior high school) did not affect school completion rates, but school changes for other reasons (for example, residential moves) were associated with decreases in completion rates.

APS respondents were asked how many schools they attended from preschool through Grade 6. Métis completers were less likely than leavers to have changed schools frequently during their early school years: 34% of completers had attended three or more elementary schools, compared with 47% of leavers.

Respondents were also asked the number of schools they attended starting in Grade 7. The percentages of Métis completers and leavers who attended three or more schools in their high school years did not differ significantly (24% and 31%).

Those who had attended more than one elementary or high school were asked the reason for the last change of school. While "regular progression through the school system" was the top reason for Métis completers and leavers, completers were more likely to cite this reason (63% versus 43%). Leavers were more likely than completers to have changed schools because of family moves (30% versus 20%).

## 2. Family-related experiences

The many personal factors that are associated with school outcomes are shaped by the different contexts in which students spend their time. The family is a key context that can influence students and their academic achievement. The 2012 APS offers information on family support during respondents' last year of school.

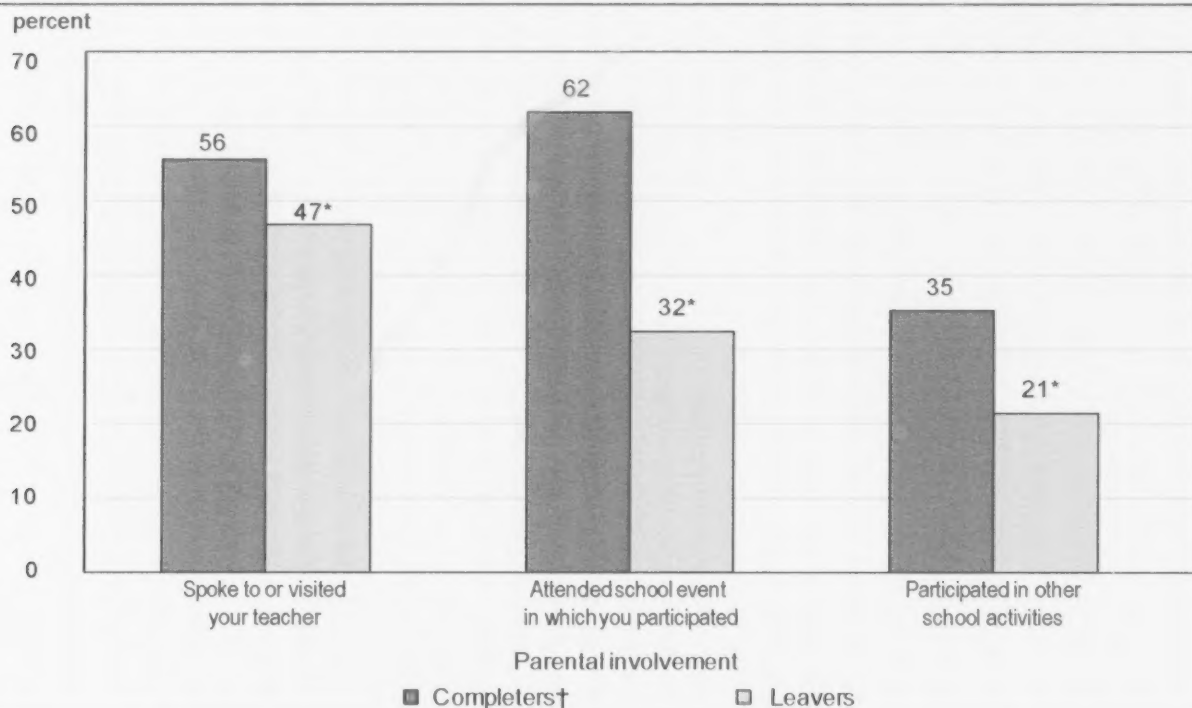
### Completers more likely to have parents who were involved in their school

Respondents were asked if their parents, guardians or any other family member did the following during their last year of school: speak to or visit their teachers; attend a school event in which they participated; or participate in any other school activity. Métis completers were more likely than leavers to report family involvement with their school (Chart C2.5). For example, 62% of completers, compared with 32% of leavers, reported that their parents had attended a school event in which they participated during their last year of school.

31. In this study, "Aboriginal" refers to students who self-identified as being Aboriginal in British Columbia's Ministry of Education data, and thus, may include First Nations (Status and non-Status), Métis, and Inuit students.

**Chart C2.5**

**Parental involvement in last year of school, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Help with homework

Respondents were asked how often their parents, guardians or other family members checked or provided help with homework in their last year of school. Métis completers and leavers were equally likely to report receiving help with their homework. For instance, 32% of both completers and leavers reported that their parents checked their homework at least once a week.

### Support from family

The 2012 APS asked if, at any time during respondents' last year in school, they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else. Among Métis who needed such support, 71% received it from their parents, guardians, or other family members. The percentages of completers and leavers who received support from their family did not differ significantly (74% and 65%).

### Leavers less likely to live with family

The 2012 APS asked respondents if they lived with a parent, guardian or any other family member during their last year of school. Close to three in ten Métis leavers (28%) did not live full-time with family during their last year of school, compared with 16% of completers.

At 38%, the percentage of female leavers who did not live full-time with their family during their last year of school exceeded the figures for male leavers (19%), female completers (19%), and male completers (11%).

### Siblings who dropped out

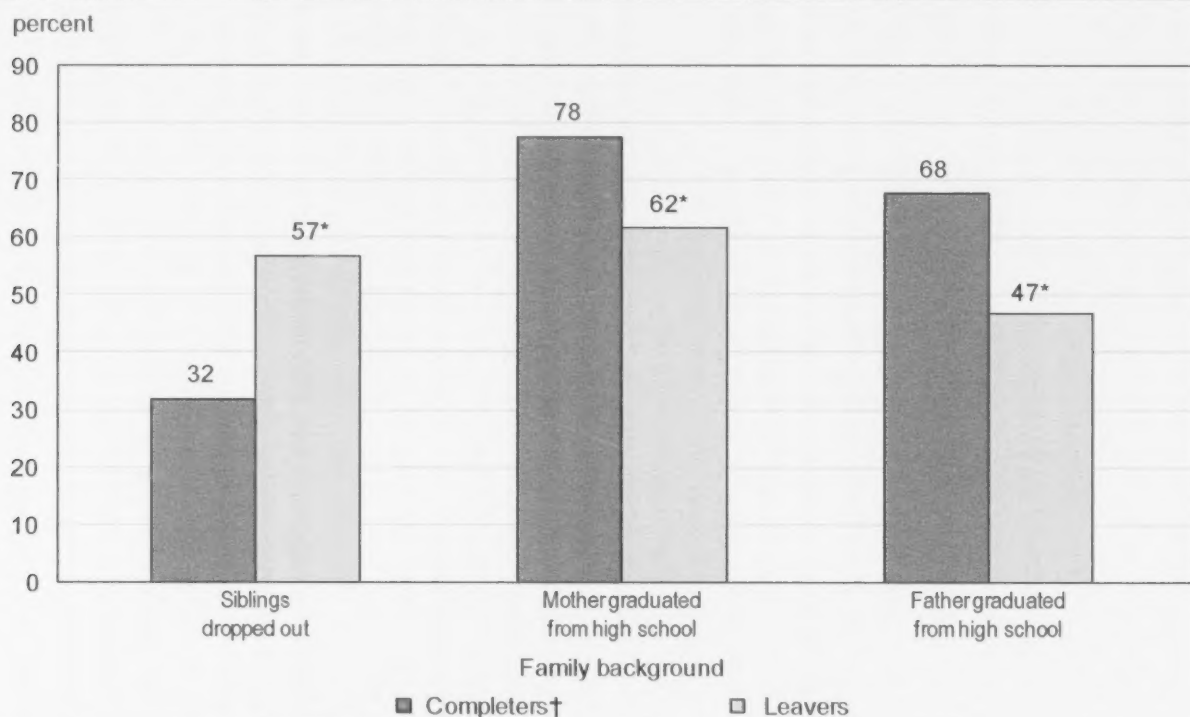
Students with a sibling who leaves school before completion are more likely to drop out themselves (Rumberger, 2011). The 2012 APS asked respondents if any of their brothers or sisters had ever dropped out of high school. Métis leavers were more likely than completers to have siblings who had dropped out (57% versus 32%) (Chart C2.6).

### Parents who graduated from high school

Parents' education is considered a "human resource" that can influence children's cognitive development, motivation, and education aspirations (Rumberger, 2011). Respondents were asked the highest level of education that their mother and father had completed. Métis completers were more likely than leavers to have parents with at least a high school diploma (Chart C2.6).

**Chart C2.6**

**Having siblings who dropped out and parental education, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### 3. School-related experiences

Along with the family, the school itself can influence students and their academic success. In particular, school policies and practices can create a climate that may promote or hinder student engagement and achievement.

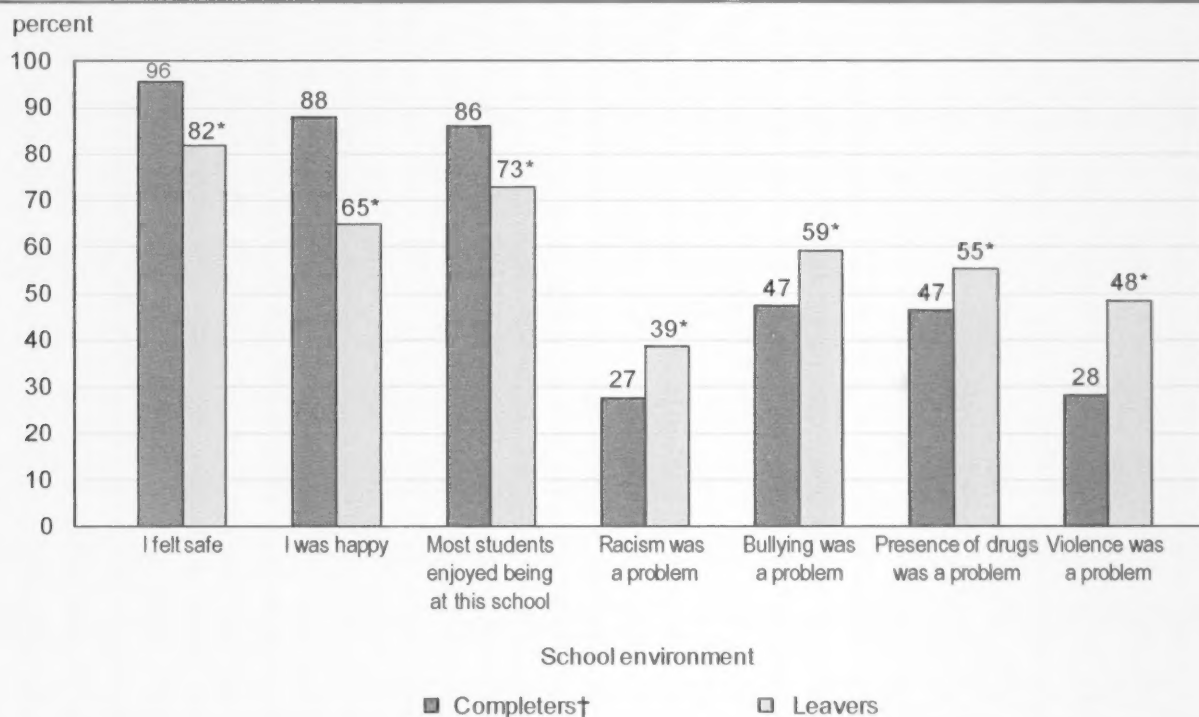
## School environment

The 2012 APS asked respondents if, during their last year of school, they felt safe and happy at school; if most students at the school enjoyed being there; and if the school offered parents many opportunities to be involved in school activities. Together, these questions constitute a "positive school environment" indicator. Métis completers were more likely than leavers to perceive a positive school environment. For instance, higher percentages of completers than leavers felt safe (96% versus 82%) and happy (88% versus 65%) at their school, and reported that most students enjoyed being there (86% versus 73%) (Chart C2.7). The percentages of completers and leavers who said that their school offered parents many opportunities to be involved did not differ significantly (68% and 63%).

Respondents were asked if, during their last year of school, racism, bullying, alcohol, drugs, or violence were problems at school. Together, these questions constitute a "negative school environment" indicator. Métis leavers were more likely than completers to perceive a negative environment at their school. Higher percentages of leavers than completers reported that racism (39% versus 27%), bullying (59% versus 47%), drugs (55% versus 47%) and violence (48% versus 28%) were problems (Chart C2.7). The percentages of leavers and completers who reported alcohol being a problem did not differ significantly (33% and 29%).

**Chart C2.7**

**Characteristics of school environment in last year of school, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## School support

The 2012 APS asked respondents if their school supported First Nations, Métis, or Inuit culture (through teaching or activities) during their last year. The percentages of Métis completers and leavers who said that their school supported their culture did not differ significantly (46% and 43%).

Respondents were also asked if at any time during their last year in school, they needed support for personal problems, career choices, course schedules, or anything else. Among Métis who said they needed such support, 77% received it from teachers, guidance counsellors, or others at school. Métis completers were more likely than leavers to report having received support from school staff (81% versus 67%).

### Section 3: Postsecondary education experiences

In recent years, growing percentages of Métis have earned postsecondary credentials (CESC, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2008). According to data for 2011 from the National Household Survey (NHS), attainment rates at the trades and college levels are higher among the Métis than among the non-Aboriginal population. However, the gap at the university level remains wide (Statistics Canada, 2013a). Barriers to completion of postsecondary education for Métis may include lack of academic preparation, the need to relocate (often from remote to urban areas), lack of financial resources, family responsibilities, and loss of support systems (Malatest et al, 2004; Holmes, 2005).

This section describes the experiences of Métis in obtaining postsecondary credentials.<sup>32</sup> Because some high school leavers pursued postsecondary studies, comparisons between leavers and completers are made when appropriate.

The first subsection is a postsecondary education profile of Métis aged 18 to 44.<sup>33</sup> The second subsection focuses on those with postsecondary credentials (trades certificate, college diploma, university certificate below the bachelor's level, university degree). The third subsection concerns those who started but never finished postsecondary education.

#### 1. Postsecondary education profile

##### Close to half with postsecondary credentials

At the time of the 2012 APS, 47% of Métis aged 18 to 44 had postsecondary credentials; according to the 2011 NHS, the comparable figure for the non-Aboriginal population in the same age range was 64%. Another 8% of Métis were attending a postsecondary institution for the first time; 12% had started postsecondary studies but did not finish; and 33% never attended a postsecondary institution.

A higher percentage of Métis women than men had postsecondary credentials (51% versus 42%). The percentages of women and men who were currently attending a postsecondary institution for the first time (8% for both), or who had started but did not finish postsecondary studies (13% and 11%) did not differ significantly.

As expected given their age, Métis aged 18 to 24 were less likely than 25- to 44-year-olds to have postsecondary credentials (24% versus 56%), but more likely to be attending a postsecondary institution for the first time (22% versus 3%).

##### About one in six leavers have postsecondary credentials

More than half (56%) of Métis high school completers had postsecondary credentials. This percentage was much smaller for leavers but nonetheless, 16% of high school leavers were postsecondary graduates. Completers were also more likely than leavers to be attending a postsecondary institution for the first time (10% versus 2%<sup>E</sup>). The percentages of completers and leavers who had started but never finished postsecondary studies did not differ significantly (Chart C3.1).

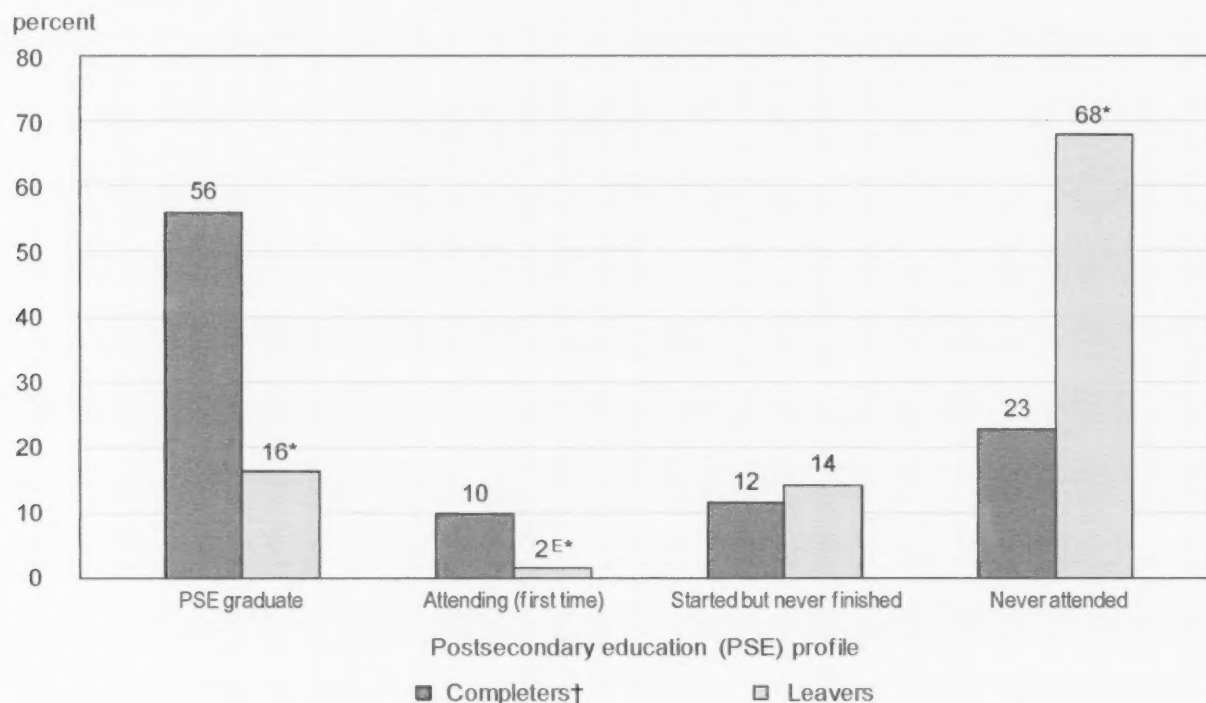
32 The 2012 APS allows for analysis of those who started but never finished postsecondary education. Similar data are not available from the NHS, as it asked only about the highest certificate, diploma or degree completed. Consequently, results from the two surveys are not directly comparable.

33 While most individuals aged 18 to 24 would not be expected to have a university degree, the analyses include this age group because they could have obtained a trades certificate or a college diploma.



**Chart C3.1**

**Postsecondary education profile, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



E use with caution

† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## 2. Postsecondary graduates

Among Métis aged 18 to 44 who were postsecondary graduates, four in ten (41%) had a college diploma (13% graduated from a program of less than one year; 22%, from a one- or two-year program; and 6%, from a program of more than two years). A quarter (26%) had a trades certificate, and another quarter (25%), a university degree. An additional 7% had a university certificate below the bachelor's level.

According to the 2011 NHS, the comparable figures for non-Aboriginal postsecondary graduates aged 18 to 44 were 34% for college diplomas, 16% for trades certificates, 43% for university degrees, and 7% for university certificates below the bachelor's level.

Métis men were more likely than women to have a trades certificate (42% versus 15%), while higher percentages of women than men had a college diploma (48% versus 32%) or a university degree (30% versus 19%).

### Majority of leavers had trades certificate

Métis high school completers and leavers tended to have graduated from different types of postsecondary programs. Among completers with postsecondary credentials, the most common were a university degree (27%), a college diploma from a one- or two-year program (23%), and a trades certificate (23%). An additional 13% graduated from a college program of less than one year; 7%, from a college program of more than two years; and 8%, from a university certificate program below the bachelor's level.

Among high school leavers with postsecondary credentials, 63% had a trades certificate, and 16%<sup>E</sup>, a college diploma from a program of less than one year.

#### Four in ten moved for postsecondary studies

Four in ten (42%) Métis with postsecondary credentials had moved to pursue their studies. The percentages who moved varied with the credentials obtained. About six in ten (62%) Métis with a university degree moved; percentages were lower among those with a trades certificate (31%), college diploma (38%), or university certificate below the bachelor's level (45%).

As expected given the relatively high percentage with a university degree, high school completers were more likely than leavers to have moved for postsecondary education (44% versus 21%<sup>E</sup>).

#### Distance education

Distance education can reduce obstacles to postsecondary education, such as cost or the need to relocate, especially for people in remote areas (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). The 2012 APS asked respondents if they were able to access any of their postsecondary courses through the Internet or other form of distance education, and if they used this method of instruction. About 20% of Métis aged 18 to 44 with postsecondary credentials used distance education; 13% had access to but did not use distance education. Two-thirds (66%) of those who were postsecondary graduates reported that they did not have access to distance education, or that it was not applicable to their program or personal situation.

High school completers were more likely than leavers to have used distance education for their postsecondary studies (21% versus 11%<sup>E</sup>).

Access to and use of distance education varied with the credentials obtained. For instance, 80% of Métis with a trades certificate and 70% with a college diploma did not have access to distance education or reported that it was not applicable to their program or personal situation, compared with 50% of those with a university degree. Métis with a university degree were the most likely to have used distance education to complete the program - 35%, compared with 16% of those with a college diploma, and 10%<sup>E</sup> of those with a trades certificate.

#### Funding

The expenses associated with postsecondary education include not only tuition, but also the costs of relocation, transportation, housing, food, daycare, and other family responsibilities (Malatest et al, 2004). APS respondents were asked if the money available for their education was sufficient to meet all their needs or expenses. About one in five (22%) Métis who had postsecondary credentials reported that the money they had was not sufficient.

The percentages of Métis high school completers and leavers who reported insufficient money to fund their postsecondary studies did not differ significantly (21% and 22%<sup>E</sup>).

APS respondents were asked to indicate all<sup>34</sup> their sources of funding for postsecondary education. Among Métis with postsecondary credentials, 45% had applied for and received a government student loan. Other sources included: own savings or working while going to school (75%); grants, bursaries and scholarships (44%); money from family that did not need to be repaid (41%); Employment Insurance or other government funding (24%); bank loan or line of credit (18%); band funding or money from AANDC (12%)<sup>35</sup>; and loan from family (8%).

Métis high school completers were more likely than leavers to have funded their postsecondary studies through a government student loan (46% versus 28%<sup>E</sup>); grants, bursaries or scholarships (45% versus 26%<sup>E</sup>); money from family that did not need to be repaid (43% versus 14%<sup>E</sup>); or a bank loan or line of credit (19% versus 5%<sup>E</sup>).

34. Percentages for sources of funding do not add to 100%, because respondents could indicate more than one source.

35. Band or AANDC funding is available only to those with Registered Indian status. About 12% of respondents who self-identified as Métis had Registered Indian status.

### 3. Started but did not finish

#### Reasons for non-completion

APS respondents who started but never finished postsecondary studies were asked why they did not graduate. Reasons cited by Métis aged 18 to 44 included that they got a job or wanted to work (20%); financial reasons (18%<sup>E</sup>); they lost interest or lacked motivation (16%); they were pregnant or caring for their children (16%<sup>E</sup>); they had other family responsibilities (4%<sup>E</sup>); own illness or disability (6%<sup>E</sup>); or their courses were too hard (4%<sup>E</sup>). The only difference that emerged by gender was the expected exception of "pregnant/caring for own children," which women mentioned more often.

#### More than one-third lacked funds

More than one-third (38%) of Métis aged 18 to 44 who started but never finished postsecondary studies said that the money available for their education was not sufficient to meet all their needs or expenses. The percentages of high school completers and leavers who had insufficient funds for postsecondary education did not differ significantly (35% and 44%).

## Section 4: Current employment experiences

Employment rates and employment income of Métis have historically been lower than those of the non-Aboriginal population (Bernier, 1997; Wilson and MacDonald, 2010; Pendakur and Pendakur, 2011). Numerous factors have been related to the less favourable labour market outcomes of Métis. These include lower educational attainment, insufficient training, lower proficiency in one of the two official languages, lone parenthood, greater geographic mobility, and discrimination (Ciceri and Scott, 2006).

In recent years, the impact of the 2008 recession was greater and persisted longer for Aboriginal workers than for the non-Aboriginal population (Usalcas, 2011). Data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) show a lower employment rate for Aboriginal people.

In 2011, 41% of the Métis population were younger than 25, compared to 30% of non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2013b). It is important to understand the employment situation that these young Métis could encounter as they enter the labour market over the next couple of decades.

This section examines the employment experiences of Métis high school completers and leavers. Particular attention is paid to the role of education in various measures of employment. The first two subsections focus on people who were employed at the time of the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) - their employment profile and their earnings. The final subsection concerns those who were not working and barriers to employment.

### 1. Overall labour force profile

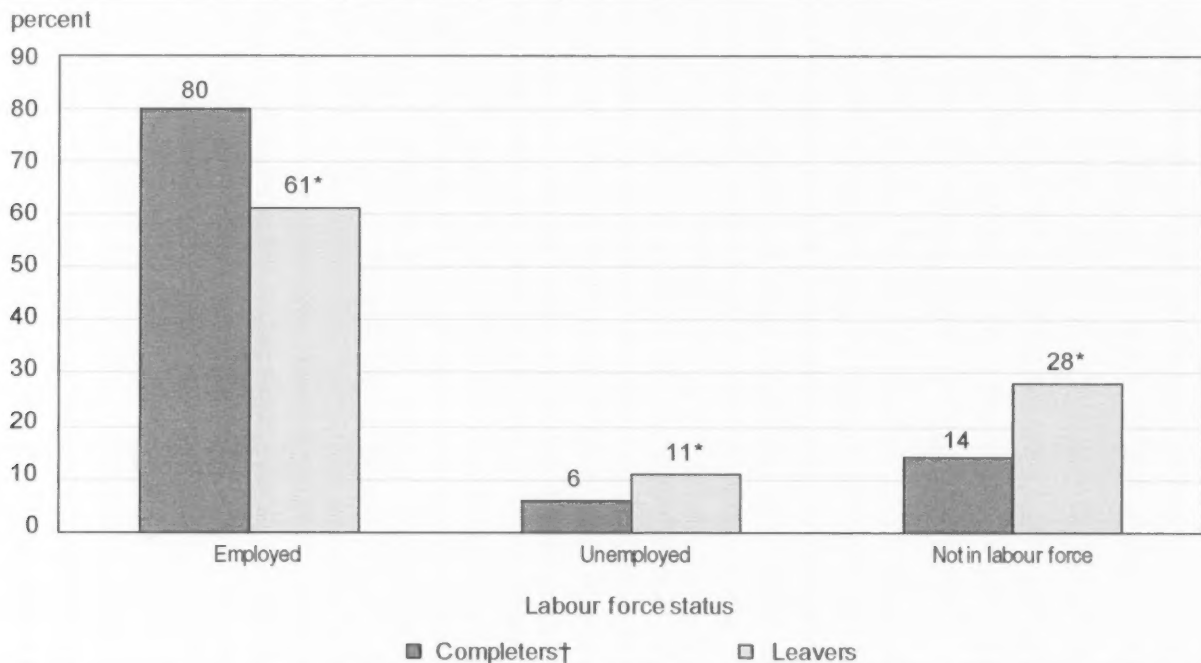
#### Completers more likely to be employed

At the time of their 2012 APS interview, 80% of Métis high school completers had a job; 6% were unemployed and looking for work; and 14% were not in the labour force (neither working nor looking for work) (Chart C4.1).

The labour profile of high school leavers was different - 61% were employed; 11% were unemployed; and 28% were not in the labour force (Chart C4.1).

**Chart C4.1**

**Labour force status, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

## 2. Métis workers

Among Métis completers, higher levels of education were generally not associated with a greater likelihood of employment. Only those with a university degree were significantly more likely to be employed than were those with a high school diploma.

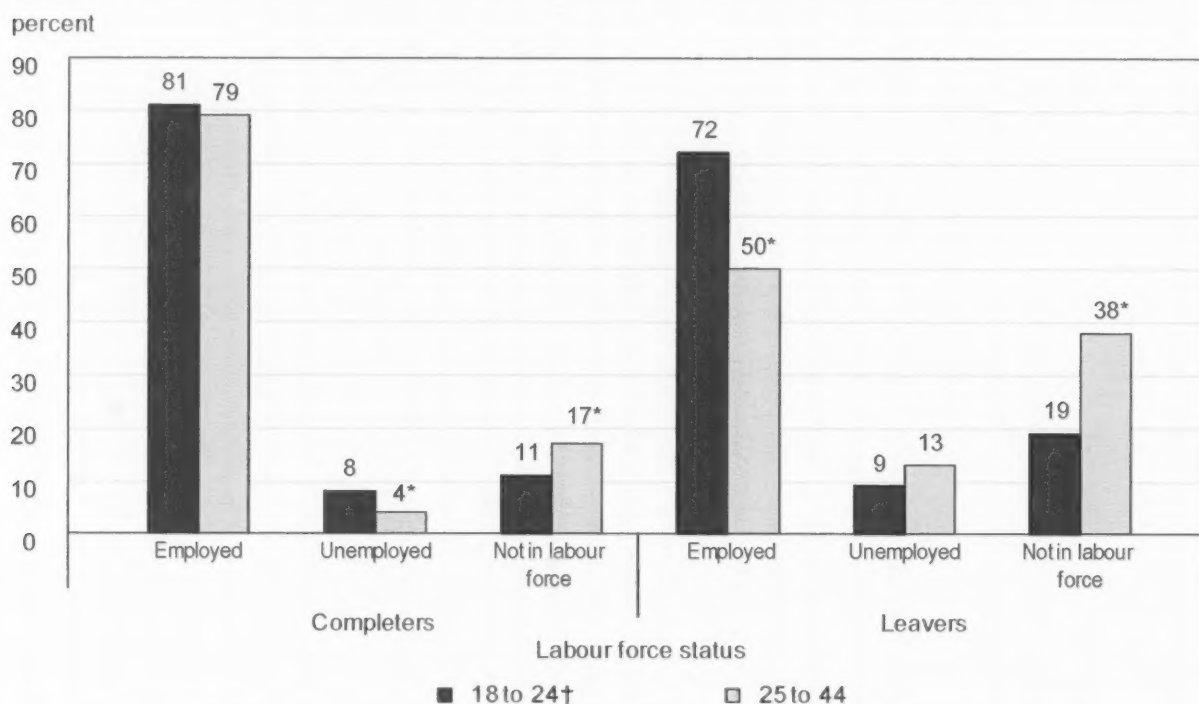
Even though they had not completed the requirements for a high school diploma, one-third of employed Métis leavers had obtained some education beyond high school - 6% had a college diploma; 12% had a trades certificate; and 14% had some postsecondary education. However, the percentages employed among leavers who did not complete high school and those who had a college diploma did not differ significantly (61% and 76%).

### Male leavers more likely than female leavers to be working

Men usually have higher rates of employment than women, who often have family responsibilities that can prevent them from fully participating in the labour force (Ferraro, 2010). However, among Métis completers, women were as likely as men to have a job (79% and 81%) (Chart C4.2). By contrast, among leavers, men were more likely than women to be employed (72% versus 50%).

**Chart C4.2**

**Labour force status by sex, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Young completers less likely to be employed

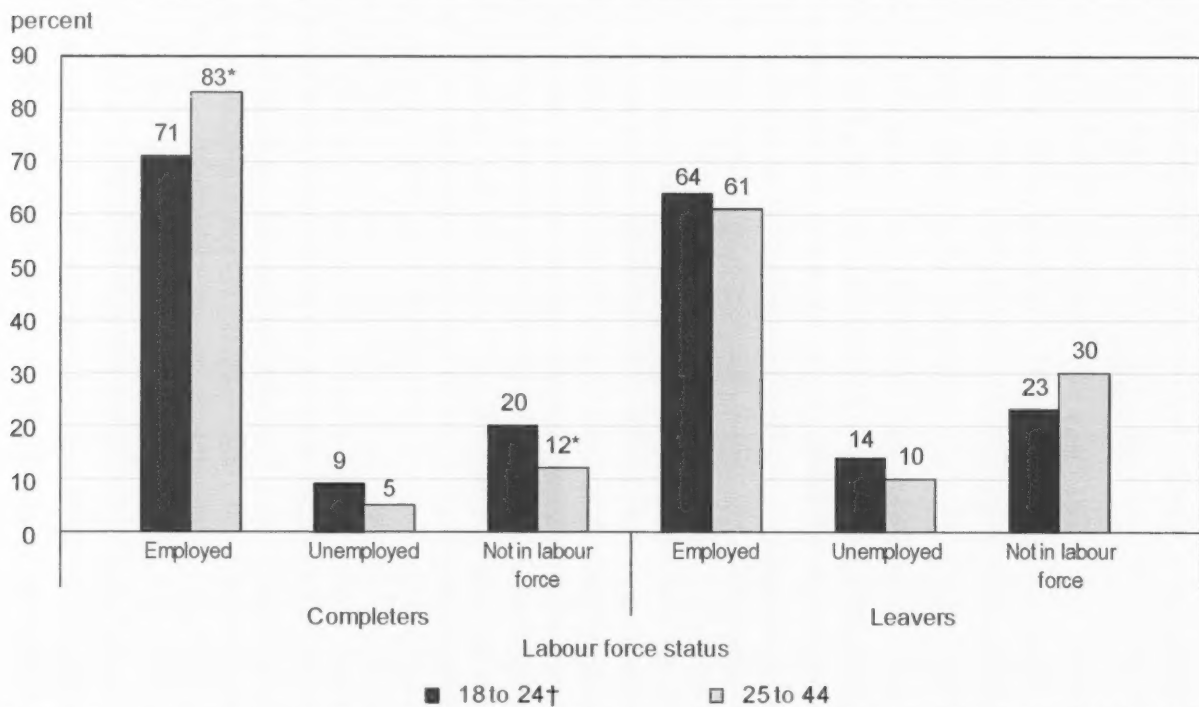
Younger adults tend to have lower rates of employment because many of them are still attending school, and therefore, may be unable or unwilling to hold a job (Bernard, 2013).

This tendency was reflected among completers - 71% of 18- to 24-year-olds were employed, compared with 83% of those aged 25 to 44 (Chart C4.3). On the other hand, the percentages of younger and older leavers who were employed did not differ significantly (64% and 61%).



**Chart C4.3**

**Labour force status by age group, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Majority worked full time

At the time of their APS interview, the majority of employed Métis completers (82%) and leavers (84%) were working full time. However, employed men were more likely than employed women to have full-time jobs. Among completers, 91% of men, compared with 74% of women, worked at least 30 hours a week; the percentages among leavers were 94% and 68%, respectively.

Younger Métis completers who were employed were less likely than those aged 25 to 44 to work full time (71% versus 86%). The difference in the prevalence of full-time employment between young and older leavers was not significant.

### Reasons for part-time work

The 2012 APS asked part-time workers the main reason why they were working less than 30 hours a week. A third (30%) worked part time because they could not find a full-time job. One-quarter cited family responsibilities, and one-fifth said they were going to school. The percentages of completers and leavers who gave these reasons did not differ significantly.

### Median employment income range

The median employment income range for Métis completers was \$30,000 to \$40,000.<sup>36,37</sup> For completers, higher education usually translated into higher median income. Completers whose highest level of attainment was high school graduation or some postsecondary reported a median employment income in the \$20,000-to-\$30,000 range; those with a trades certificate or a university degree had a median income in the \$40,000-to-\$50,000 range.

The median employment income range of leavers, even those who had a trades certificate or college diploma, was \$20,000 to \$30,000.

Men's employment income usually exceeds that of women, because women are more likely to work part time or to have less job seniority because of work interruptions to care for family (Ferrao, 2010). An employment income gap was evident among Métis: the median income range of female completers was \$20,000 to \$30,000, compared with \$40,000 to \$50,000 for male completers. Among leavers, median employment income ranges were \$10,000 to \$20,000 for women and \$30,000 to \$40,000 for men.

### 3. Unemployed and not in labour force

Four in ten (39%) Métis leavers and 20% of Métis completers were not working at the time of their 2012 APS interview.<sup>38</sup> Specifically, 11% of leavers were unemployed, and 28% were not in the labour force. The corresponding figures for completers were 6% and 14% (Chart C4.1).

#### Reasons for not finding work among unemployed

Among unemployed Métis, the most common reasons for not finding work were the lack of necessary work experience (57%), shortage of jobs (55%), not having the necessary training and education (54%), and not knowing what type of job they want (32%) (Chart C4.4).<sup>39</sup>

Completers and leavers were equally likely to cite job shortages, work inexperience, and not knowing what type of job they wanted as reasons for not finding work. As expected, leavers were more likely than completers to say they did not have the appropriate education (72% versus 45%).

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36. Because personal employment income was reported in ranges, a median income range is calculated. The "median range" is the category for which the cumulative percentage of reporting respondents came closest to 50%.

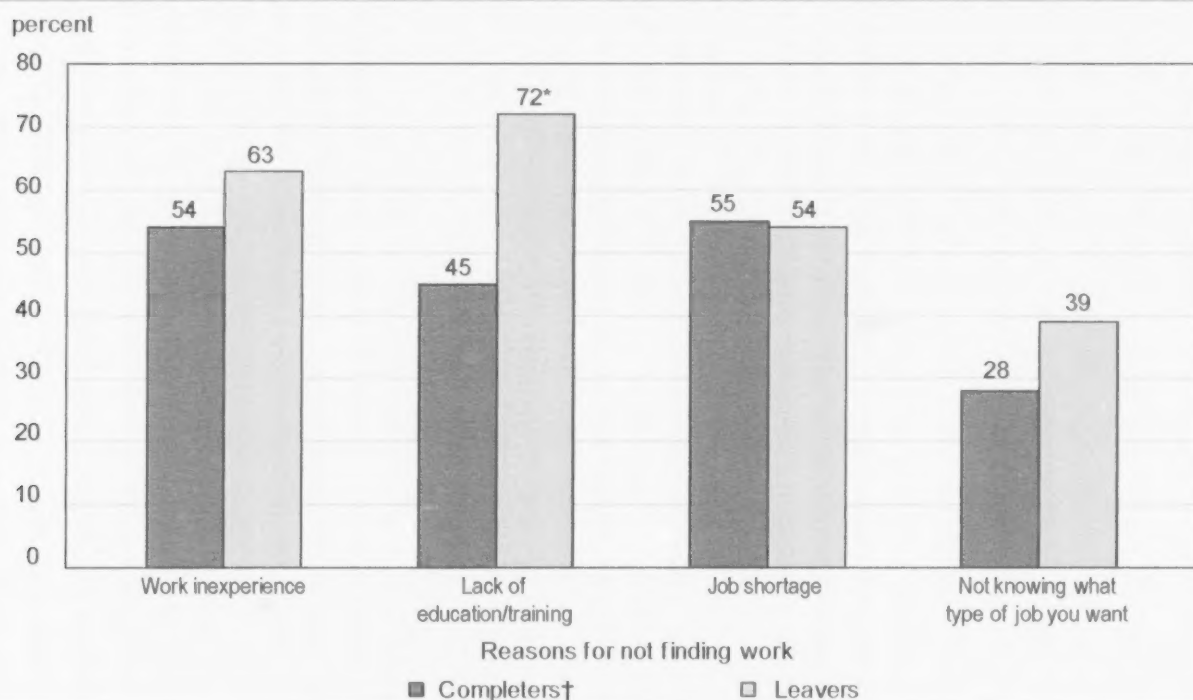
37. Data pertain only to those who were employed in the week before their APS interview and who reported their personal employment income.

38. It is important to distinguish between the two categories of "not working." Respondents who had actively looked for a job in the previous four weeks are defined as "unemployed"; those who did not work and did not look for work are classified as "not in the labour force."

39. Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents could identify more than one reason.

**Chart C4.4**

**Selected reasons for not finding work among unemployed, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Non-participation in labour force

Many people who are not in the labour force are retirees, homemakers, students or permanently unable to work. Others are waiting for replies from potential employers, waiting to be recalled to a former job, or discouraged as they believe no work is available. On the other hand, some who are not in the labour force do indeed want a job. This was the case for 28% of Métis who were not in the labour force.

The 2012 APS asked individuals who were not in the labour force but wanted a job why they did not look for work. The three main reasons were their own illness or disability (32%<sup>E</sup>), caring for children (21%<sup>E</sup>), and going to school (20%<sup>E</sup>). One-third (35%<sup>E</sup>) of women said they did not look for work because of their own illness or disability, and 29%<sup>E</sup> said they were caring for children. One-quarter (28%<sup>E</sup>) of men said they were going to school, and the same percentage (27%<sup>E</sup>) cited illness or disability.

## Section 5: Further education or training

The previous sections examined respondents' past education experiences and their employment status at the time of the survey. The 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) also asked Métis aged 18 to 44 questions about their future education plans and obstacles to additional schooling.

Barriers such as cost, time constraints and family responsibilities can prevent people from taking the education or training they would like. Aboriginal students are particularly likely to face challenges in furthering their education (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). Some, for example, may lack financial resources, or be unaware of help available through student aid programs. Other barriers may include skepticism about the employment benefits of additional education (which can lead to motivational issues), and experienced or perceived racism (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

### Barriers to further education or training

According to the APS, a number of barriers prevented Métis aged 18 to 44 from taking further education or training. Differences emerged between high school completers and leavers, as well as by gender and age group.

Finances usually play a role in plans for further schooling. Leavers were more likely than completers to report that they could not afford to take the education or training they would like (52% versus 37%); this was true for both men and women and the two age cohorts (Chart C5.1).

Personal or family responsibilities are a barrier to further schooling for many Métis women who left high school before completion. About two-thirds (64%) of female leavers cited this obstacle, compared with 30% of female completers and male leavers, and 18% of male completers.

Leavers were more likely than completers to report that time constraints (too busy, no time to study) prevented them from undertaking further education (48% versus 21%). Métis aged 25 to 44 were more likely to report this barrier (28%) than those aged 18 to 24 (22%).

Leavers were also more likely to indicate that they lacked confidence or felt unprepared to further their schooling (46% versus 19%). Female leavers (56%) were more likely to report lacking confidence than were male leavers (37%) or male (19%) and female (20%) completers.

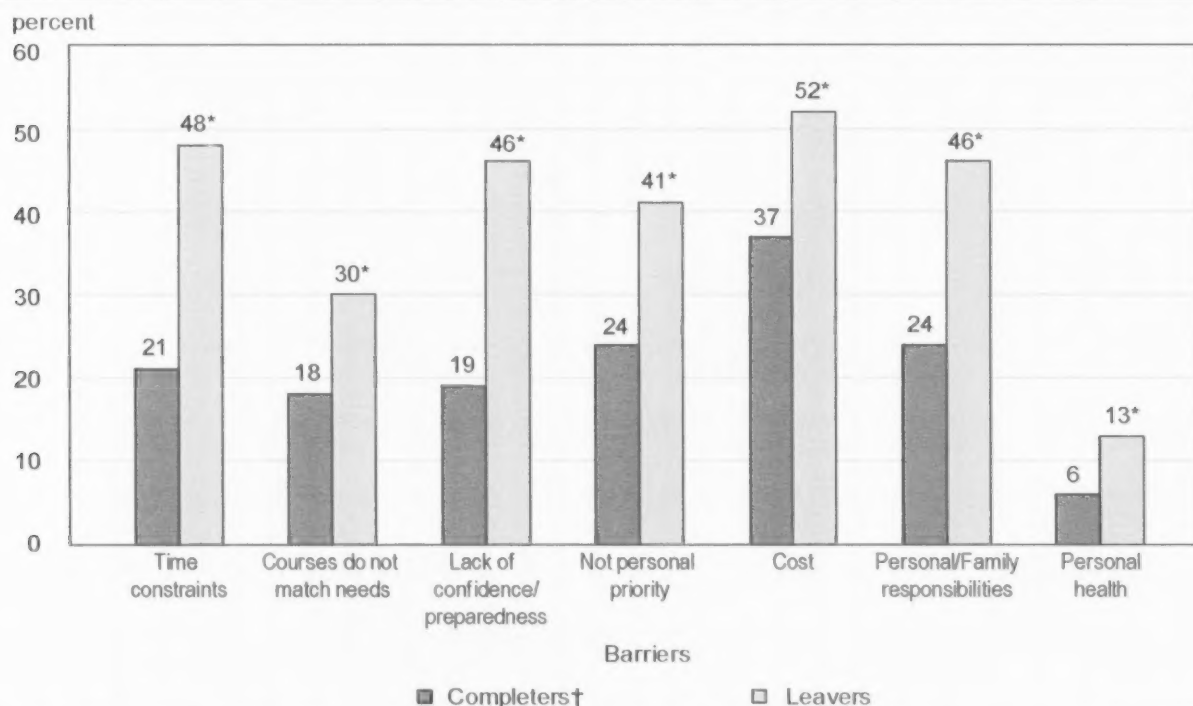
About four in ten (41%) Métis leavers reported that taking courses was not a high personal priority, compared with 24% of completers. Men were more likely than women to indicate that further schooling was not a priority (32% versus 23%).

Leavers were also more likely than completers to report that the courses that were available did not match their needs (30% versus 18%). While this finding was true for men and women and for those in the 25 to 44 age group, the figures for 18- to 24-year-old leavers and completers did not significantly differ.

Female leavers were the most likely to report that their personal health was an impediment to further education or training – 20%. This compared with 8% of female completers, 7% of male leavers, and 4%<sup>E</sup> of male completers.

**Chart C5.1**

**Barriers to further education or training, Métis completers and leavers aged 18 to 44, Canada, 2012**



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012

### Six in ten plan further education

Respondents to the 2012 APS were asked if they planned to "take any other education that could be counted towards a certificate, diploma or degree from an educational institution."<sup>40</sup> Six in ten (59%) Métis aged 18 to 44 reported such plans; an additional 3% were uncertain.

While the overall percentages of leavers and completers planning further schooling did not differ significantly (63% and 58%), female leavers were more likely than male leavers and completers of both genders to report such plans. Three-quarters (73%) of female leavers planned to continue their education, compared with 55% of male leavers, 56% of male completers and 59% of female completers. As expected, Métis aged 18 to 24 were more likely than those aged 25 to 44 to plan further schooling (78% versus 52%).

### Plans for further education not different for employed, unemployed and not in labour force

The percentages planning further education or training did not differ significantly by labour force status; 68% of Métis who were unemployed had such plans, as did 58% of those who were employed, and 63% of those not in the labour force.

40. For respondents attending school at the time of their APS interview, this referred to education beyond their current studies.



## Conclusion

This report describes the first findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), presented at a national level. The survey's thematic approach allows an unprecedented depth of analysis of a broad range of education and employment experiences among First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit and Métis. The current study focuses on those aged 18 to 44 and examines their education pathways as well as factors that are positively or negatively associated with high school completion. The analyses also look at postsecondary schooling, employment outcomes, and plans for further education or training of high school completers and leavers.

At the time of the 2012 APS, 72% of First Nations people living off reserve, 42% of Inuit, and 77% of Métis aged 18 to 44 had completed the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent. Findings from this report suggest that the path to high school completion may not be straightforward. A variety of personal, family and school-level characteristics were found to be associated with high school completion among off-reserve First Nations people, Inuit and Métis. This is consistent with literature for the general population on school achievement, which suggests that multiple contexts in students' lives should be taken into account to understand risk and protective factors for high school graduation.

The coming years will see many young First Nations, Inuit and Métis people enter the labour market, and the role of education will be pivotal in securing jobs. While learning outside the formal education system can lead to meaningful work and job satisfaction, the current analyses show a strong association between formal education and employment opportunities. Looking to the future, the majority of off-reserve First Nations people, Inuit and Métis indicated they planned to take further education toward obtaining a certificate, diploma or degree.

The 2012 APS is a rich source of data with great potential for further research. The analyses in this report are largely descriptive and point to areas where additional work is required so that the relationships can be more fully understood. For example, many of the factors associated with completing or leaving high school that were explored are, themselves, inter-related. It would be informative to investigate associations between high school completion and these factors when they are taken into account simultaneously.

Also, while the present report pertains to adults aged 18 to 44, data are available for off-reserve First Nations people, Inuit and Métis aged 6 or older. Thus, in keeping with a life-long learning framework, analysis of the education experiences of children and youth currently attending elementary and high school is possible, as well as those of individuals aged 45 or older.

While a broad range of factors was examined, other areas merit further study, including family history of residential school attendance and language. The 2012 APS also allows for research on topics such as health, housing, and mobility, not only at a national, but also, at a regional level. Data from the 2012 APS can be used by Aboriginal organizations, governments at all levels, service providers and researchers to inform decision-making and conduct academic studies.

Plans for future analytical products include reports on Inuit health, Métis employment, and the educational experiences of First Nations children and youth living off reserve.

More information about the 2012 APS can be found at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/APS>.

## Concepts and definitions

This study focuses on high school completers and leavers. These groups are defined as:

**Completers:** people who had met the minimum requirements for a secondary (high) school diploma or equivalent at the time of the APS.

**Leavers:** people who were not attending high school and had not met the minimum requirements for a secondary (high) school diploma or equivalent at the time of the APS, or those who were enrolled in a high school equivalency program but had not completed it.

This differs from the highest level of educational attainment because some high school completers may have obtained further education at a trade school, college or university, and therefore, have a certificate, diploma or degree beyond the high school level. Equally, some leavers may have postsecondary credentials despite not having completed the requirements for a high school diploma.

APS data on high school completers and leavers are not meant to produce a "graduation rate." For examples of calculating a "graduation rate," refer to OECD (2013).

In some instances, this report refers to "highest level of educational attainment" - the highest certificate, diploma or degree that an individual completed. For ease of use, certain category names are shortened:

**Trades certificate:** apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma, including "Registered Apprenticeship certificates" and "trades certificates other than Registered Apprenticeship certificates."

**College diploma:** college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma.

**University certificate or diploma below bachelor's level:** certificates or diplomas awarded for non-degree programs completed through a university. These are often connected with professional associations in fields such as accounting, banking, insurance or public administration. If the certificate or diploma program does not require a bachelor's degree to enrol, it is classified as below the bachelor's level.

**University degree:** bachelor's degree; university certificate or diploma above the bachelor's level; degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry; master's degree; and earned doctorate.

Many of the labour force questions in the APS are from the Labour Force Survey (LFS); therefore, concepts are generally defined the same way. The reference date for the APS depends on the subject matter of the question. For example, the labour market activity questions refer to the past week; the income questions refer to the year leading up to December 31, 2011.

Labour force status divides the population into three mutually exclusive categories:

**Employed:** persons who, during the reference period, did any work for pay or profit. This includes those who had a job but were absent from work for reasons such as own illness or disability, personal or family responsibilities, vacation, or labour dispute. It also includes unpaid family work, defined as unpaid work contributing to the operation of a family business or farm.

**Unemployed:** persons who were available for work during the reference week and who had looked for a job in the previous four weeks; were on temporary layoff during the reference period; or had a new job to start within four weeks from the reference week.

**Not in the labour force:** persons unwilling or unable to work; that is, they were neither employed nor unemployed.

This report uses the concepts of percentage of the population aged 18 to 44 employed, unemployed, and not in the labour force:

**Percentage employed (employment rate):** number of employed persons as a percentage of the population. The rate for a particular group (for example, aged 18 to 24) is the number employed in that group as a percentage of the population of that group.

**Percentage unemployed:** number unemployed as a percentage of the population in that group. The unemployment rate calculated from the LFS (unemployed divided by labour force) should not be confused with the percentage unemployed in this report.

**Percentage not in the labour force:** number who were neither employed nor unemployed as a percentage of the population.

The employment section refers to the highest level of education attained. The category, "some postsecondary education," refers to individuals who started but did not complete the requirements for any diploma, certificate or degree beyond the high school level.

**Median income range:** Because personal employment income was reported in ranges, a median income range is calculated. The "median range" is the category for which the cumulative percentage of reporting respondents came closest to 50%.

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